MISTAKES IN TEACHING

HOW TO CORRECT THEM

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MISTAKES IN TEACHING

HOW TO CORRECT THEM

Yendes, Lucy A.

Preston Papers

P737

BY

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT

Now Editor of the "New Education"

Revised and Enlarged

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DEDICATION.

To my dear old pupils, who for so many years have walked hand in hand with me, and especially to such of them as are now engaged in teaching or in preparing themselves for this delightful work, this little volume is most affectionately dedicated, by

THE AUTHOR.

PREFATORY.

Pausing at the threshold of perpetuating in covers these "PRESTON PAPERS," the author desires to say that Miss Preston is no ideal teacher, but one well known to both publishers and author, as a *bona fide* teacher who still lives, works, and enjoys her work, with a zest unknown to mere "machine" teachers. The experiences are real and possibly not unusual, and are offered to the pedagogical fraternity with the hope that they may be suggestive of a "Beyond" in the work.

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

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PRESTON PAPERS.

No. I.

GOVERNMENT.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., February 25, 188–.

MR. —— ——, State Supt.

My Dear Sir:—State Superintendents are supposed to be a sort of walking storehouse of knowledge, aren't they? Presuming your answer will be an unqualified "Yes," I will proceed to state the cause of my bewilderment. It may be that you or some of your associates can give me light from your lamp without diminishing your own benefit from it. Do not laugh at me for not being able to solve my problems alone.

To be brief, I am engaged as second assistant in Public School No. 4, where I have served for twenty-one years; so I think I know some things about its requirements quite as well as the lady principal does who has only been here since September, and is very young, and can have had but little experience compared to mine. And here my puzzle begins.

Our schools are all under the supervision of a superintendent who has held the position a great many years, and they have borne the reputation of being model schools, with

perfect order and discipline, but since Miss Preston came (There! I have actually told you her name, although I did not mean to) we have been candidly informed by her that we were "stultifying the children, and making mere puppets of them!" Just think of it! And she has such peculiar ideas, too, and she carries them out in spite of Mr. Johnson —our city superintendent—who really opposed her methods at first, although I must acknowledge that he rather recommends them now. For instance: she had not been installed but a few days before he said to her:

"Miss Preston, your school is too noisy"

"Did I understand you to say it is too noisy?" with a quiet but forceful emphasis on the last two words.

"Yes. Oh, I don't mean in the schoolroom They seem to be quiet enough here; but at their play before school and during recess."

"Well, so long as they are quiet and orderly in the house, it seems to me perfectly proper for them to use their lungs for safety valves, through which to get rid of their superfluous steam, while out of doors — provided that they keep good natured and use no bad words."

"This is a quiet little city and the people will complain if the school children are rude and noisy."

"Rudeness I do not tolerate," said she, "but legitimate noise is another and a very different thing. If entirely shut up there is always danger of an explosion; so I prefer to encourage them to dispose of their excessive vitality in that way, at proper times, rather than risk its operation, to their disadvantage and my own, during study hours; and we can hardly expect two or three hundred boys and girls to be out in the street or a 7 x 9 yard and not make a noise."

She spcke very decidedly; and he looked, as he doubtless felt, perfectly aghast that his opinion should be even questioned, much less entirely disregarded. And no wonder, for during all these years not a dissenting voice has been heard in objection to anything he has done or proposed doing—for which fealty Miss Preston is pleased to say: "His teachers have grown to be mere machines, and the work done by them machine work, and very poor at that."

Well, he actually passed that over without a word, although I fully expected that she would be summarily dismissed "for insubordination"—as two ladies were at one time in Oswego.

He did not come near our school again for a whole week, although his coming to settle difficulties used to be of frequent occurrence under the former dispensations; but when he made his next appearance they had another "little unpleasantness." She had gone down stairs to assist one of the second grade teachers out of a momentary trouble, and on her return Miss Preston found Mr. Johnson doing sentinel duty at her desk.

"Do you consider it conducive to good order, Miss Preston, to leave your school without a monitor?"

"Much more so than it would be to encourage tattling personal spite, revenge, etc., by having one."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Simply this: their self-respect is injured by being watched as if they were criminals, by spies or detectives appointed for that purpose. Self-respect is the basis of all self-government, which is the only true government for children and youth; and just in proportion as we injure or destroy that fundamental element of real order, we create

the very faults we are seeking to eradicate. To rob a child of its self-respect is like removing the mainspring from a watch; and the constant looking for faults will soon give occasion that we shall not look in vain, for by that very means we are planting and cultivating the seeds we most earnestly wish rooted out, and we come to be looked upon as the natural enemy of the children whom we really love and honestly wish to benefit."

"How, then, would you manage such a roomful whenever you find it necessary to leave them for a time by themselves?"

"I don't intend to leave such young children alone much, of course, as mischief would inevitably ensue among so large a number; but when I must, I sometimes say: 'Now, children, be careful not to waste any time while I am gone, and *watch yourselves;* then when I come back perhaps you may tell me if you do anything you ought not to.'"

"And do you mean to say that *they will tell of themselves?*" he asked, a trifle incredulously.

"Certainly; after a little education in that direction they much prefer, as a rule, to confess their own faults, rather than have some one else do so for them."

"I see that they do not all sit in a straight line. That will never do. Order *must* be preserved."

"Certainly it must. But what *is* order? If they were candles, now, and had all been run in one mold, we might set them up regularly at just such an angle, and require them to stay 'fixed' the entire twenty-four hours without any compunctions of conscience; but as they are human beings, we may reasonably suppose that a slight variation of position now and then will be found acceptable to the tired

muscles; and I think that in the long run the very best order is secured by giving them a little less military drill and a trifle more latitude as to position, besides rendering ourselves less liable to be held amenable to the law that provides 'for the prevention of cruelty to children.'"

"Why, there is a little boy *actually swinging his feet* in school time!"

"And why not, pray? He is very intent upon getting his lesson — and at the same time he is quite careful not to make a noise. So long as it does not disturb any one else and interferes with nobody's equal rights, I would not rebuke it."

"But it looks *badly*, and gives your school the appearance of being disorderly."

"Conceded; and we are told to avoid even the appearance of evil," said she, cheerfully. "But in this case, I'd prefer taking my chances on the appearance of it, rather than on the evil itself. There are forces constantly at work within us that tend toward the discovery of the principle of perpetual motion, and they can hardly be repressed in a healthy child without serious physical injury. The greatest good to the greatest number is the object I desire to secure, even if done at the expense of my reputation as a disciplinarian. Besides, I am not quite convinced that geometric regularity of position is the highest type of order," etc., etc., etc.

Now, Mr. Superintendent, what will be the result of these and like heresies? — for this is only a tithe, she warmly declaring that we are "in the rut" and that she will resign her position before she will allow herself to be driven into it. At first I was horrified, and I still fail to understand

some of her startling theories. *Will* you bring the combined wisdom of yourself and your intelligent associates to my assistance? *Is* she living in advance of the age, or are we away down here a little bit backward and ante-diluvian? I am candid in wishing to know the best ways, and maybe we have become a little "set" in our methods.

If you please, I wish to tell you sometime about her ideas of corporal punishment as preferred to some others, that *is* if you wish to hear again from

Yours, in the common cause,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. 11.

REPORTS.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., March 13, 188–.

MR. —— ——, Supt. Public Instruction.

My Dear Sir:—Your very kind reply to my recent recital was duly received, and contents fully noted — and having really determined to unburden myself of my difficulties I scarcely know where to begin. Should I fail to find a stopping place, you will please insert a period wherever you deem it proper, and I will take the hint.

I think I will begin with a sketch of our teachers' meeting for November, although the vexed question of corporal punishment was not discussed until the December meeting. But of that anon.

We have always held our teachers' meetings on the third Saturday of each month. No one is obliged to be present, although all are expected to. After the opening exercises the roll is called and each teacher responds by reading his or her "Monthly Report," which is about as follows:

Number of boys enrolled. Girls, ditto. Total.

Average age of boys. Ditto, girls. Total.

Average attendance of boys. Ditto, girls. Total.

Cases of tardiness among boys. Ditto, girls. Total.

Time (given in hours and minutes) lost by tardiness among boys. Ditto, girls. Total.

Number of absences among boys. Ditto, girls. Total.

Absences excused among boys. Ditto, girls. Total.

Lessons lost by absence and tardiness among boys. Ditto, girls. Total.

Names and number of classes taught, with the average per cent of scholarship for each class.

Now was not that systematic?

After a few remarks from the Chair — our superintendent always held that office — in which he generally thinks "we are getting along comfortably," and "hopes we realize our responsibilities and will do our duty" in a very calm and dignified manner, we are dismissed. This has been the routine for many years, and it stands to reason that the "Reports" are beneficial, else why should we have them?

Occasionally the meetings have been varied by the presence of one or more members of the board of education, who would pat us on the back, as it were, in some set phrase when called upon to address the meeting.

Well, Miss Preston was present at the September session, but she did not take any part — simply saying when her name was called that she "had not prepared any report, and she did not as yet see the advantage of taking such a census every month."

You ought to have seen the significant looks among the teachers as Mr. Johnson replied, with a rather red face: "It has the advantage of showing at a glance just where we stand."

"Very likely," she responded rather dryly, "but I fail to see, myself, how the number of boys or girls, or both, in School No. 9, can affect my own; or how the knowledge of their average age or scholarship can benefit my pupils."

"Well, well, we won't discuss it now," he said, more testily than real politeness would countenance. "The secretary will please call the next name."

As that happened to be my own, I arose and read the report over which I had spent all the previous evening and a good share of Saturday morning. I had done so every month for years, but somehow its importance now faded from my mind; and I wondered, while reading it, if Mr. Johnson really thought these "reports" are accurate. Of course "There are tricks in all trades but ours," but I will tell you confidentially that this system has been made the excuse for some false entries. Bad book-keeping is not entirely confined to county treasurers and bank cashiers. Miss Young, for instance, may not want to have it appear that the standard of her school is lower than that of some one else, so she does not always record the absence or tardiness; or if she does, the temptation is to diminish the time so lost. Perhaps Mr. Brown would give us the impression that his methods of instruction are rather superior; hence, his pupils are sometimes reported higher in scholarship than they really deserve. It is lamentable, but none the less true, that such things really occur where the public expects only such examples as are worthy of imitation.

However, I won't stop to moralize, for I want to tell you about our November meeting. Of course we had one as usual in October, but Miss Preston was not present, having actually gone to the woods hickory nutting with her school children! Actually, I don't see how she dared.

Mr. Johnson fidgeted some during the exercises until Miss Preston's name was called. Then he arose and said, with the unusual blandness by which we all know when he is very much excited inwardly:

"As Miss Preston is not here to respond for herself, perhaps I can best explain her absence by reading a communication I received from her last evening. I don't know as she intended it to be made public," half apologetically, "but I don't really understand what she does mean sometimes, nor what to think of her methods either in teaching or governing."

Without further ado he read the following note:

"MR. JOHNSON,

Respected Sir: — Having no particular taste for statistics, and no special hope or desire to undo the red tape that surrounds our faculty meeting, I trust you will excuse my absence from it to-morrow, as I intend, if the day is bright, to take my school for a walk to the woods, two or three miles up the river.

Yours, Respectfully,

H. M. PRESTON."

A dead silence ensued, like that which precedes a clap of thunder on a June day. Then Mr. Johnson handed the note to the secretary to be filed among the other archives of the institution, with the remark that "Perhaps, since Miss Preston feels free to criticise the manner and matter of our meeting, we had better ask her to take charge of the next one."

Some of us fancied that his tone was rather cynical; but if it was he must have been disappointed at the result of his suggestion, for Mr. Brown immediately moved that "she be requested to act as president at the next meeting." The motion was instantly seconded by two voices and carried by a unanimous vote of the house.

I wanted to ask that she also be requested to furnish

a report of her Saturday in the woods, for I had a vague idea that there was something more than a mere pleasure excursion in her mental program; but courage failed me, for I wouldn't dare incur Mr. Johnson's displeasure, as I'd be pretty sure to do if I suggested anything like a "new departure," be it ever so tiny. I afterward made private investigations among her pupils and — would you believe it? — I found that she actually gave them practical lessons in botany, from the leaves, shrubs, and trees, as they went along; from the location of streets, lots, and houses, she taught geography, as well as from the hills, river banks, etc.; she called their attention to the science of geology by means of the sand, gravel, and rocks; she cultivated their taste for natural history by living specimens of squirrels, birds, and insects in the woods; as if that were not enough, she inspired them with a wish to study literature, by producing a volume of Bryant and reading his grand old "Forest Hymn" while they were resting in the woods before eating their lunch. To finish with, she laid aside their usual lessons and text books the next Monday afternoon, and had her entire school writing compositions! Only, she did not use the word *composition.* She merely said:

"Now, if you will put away your books, quietly, you may each tell me what you saw or heard or did last Saturday, that pleased, interested, or instructed you. But as there are so many of you, there will not be time for all to speak, so you may *write* on your slates; and those who have time and wish to may read what they write. Then if any of you prefer to have me read it for you I will do so sometime to-morrow."

And one little boy really cried because his slate "was full

and he hadn't half finished; he wanted to tell about that cunning lizard he saw," and was only consoled by being assured that if no one else wrote about it, he should have a chance another day.

It is just wonderful how much she crowds into a small compass; and she mixes education into everything, so that half the time the children don't know whether they are studying or playing.

But where was I? Oh, about our November session! Through carelessness or otherwise, the secretary neglected to tell her of her election and consequent duties, until the evening before the meeting. But she accepted the situation, ignoring the intended compliment or sarcasm, or whatever was meant by the superintendent, and after the usual preliminaries addressed us somewhat as follows:

"My Fellow Teachers:

It is with great pleasure that I respond to the invitation which came to me at the eleventh hour, which tardiness would render superfluous any apology for lack of requisite preparation. Ours is a noble calling, and they who enter it should be from among the very best types of manhood and womanhood. Questions of importance in the common cause should be discussed in common council, with ample opportunity for free expression of ideas and interchange of personal experience. All can contribute something. Those who have grown gray in the honorable service can give us who are younger the benefit of their wisdom; those who have attained brilliant successes in some particular department may be glad to get advice in some other; those who have failed anywhere will be glad to know how to retrieve their mistakes. Thus we can be of mutual help to each

other, and the monthly association of teachers be made to do grand work for the cause. Feeling so illy prepared to say anything practical — and I'm daily becoming more convinced that nothing is worth saying in such a place that is not practical — I took the liberty to bring my November number of the 'Teachers' Companion' which always has something of interest."

She proceeded to read an article on "School Management," and then asked us to talk it over and to give our own experience; and do you know that we got so well under way and so much interested, that we never thought to dismiss at the traditional hour, but stayed on and on, until the light became so dim that we could scarcely see. It was not a bit formal, and I was not at all sure it would be popular; but the interest increased every moment.

It is strange how far a little enthusiasm will go toward awakening an interest in anything. Carlyle, I think it is, says, in effect, that to convince others a man must be thoroughly in earnest, and I believe it.

Mr. Johnson actually asked Miss Preston to continue in the chair! This honor she declined however, saying, with a laugh, that "Under a republican form of government, a frequent change of administration is desirable, so that the offices with their emoluments and perquisites can be more evenly distributed among both parties;" and Mr. Whipple was promoted to the dignity of president for the next meeting. I meant to tell you in this about Miss Preston's "school museum" — but must close this already-too-long letter from

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. III.

PUNISHMENT.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., April 22, 188–.

MR. —— ——, Supt., etc.

My Dear Sir: — Your letter of inquiry is received, and would say in reply that we all enjoyed our November meeting so well that we determined to ask Mr. Johnson to give up the old way of conducting them, and let us try the "class-meeting" method in its stead, which we had found so practical and so really beneficial — for in that one afternoon we had gathered a rich harvest of ideas that were utterly unattainable in the old routine of statistics heretofore pursued so unquestioningly; and we had been inspired with a zeal for the work before unknown to us. A committee, therefore, waited upon him, and after presenting some well met objections, he consented to let matters take their course for a time. So we came together for the December meeting with a feeling of enthusiasm that was quite novel to some of us.

Mr. Whipple was in the chair, and in a few well chosen words he proposed the subject of *Punishment* as a nucleus around which we might all gather, and said that he himself had experienced some difficulty in solving the problem as to whether we had any *right* to use the rod, but that he found less and less occasion to use it every year he taught.

Miss Wood was then called upon, and she confessed that she had never yet attempted to administer corporal punishment without fear of personal consequences to herself! It seemed quite easy to believe her, for although large of stature and somewhat advanced in years, she has no "presence;" and I can readily believe that under her weak administration the majesty of the law would suffer contempt. Indeed, I am told by one of her assistants — she is Principal of Grammar School No. 5 — that she actually has to "play tag" with any one whom she sees fit to call up for real or supposed misdemeanors; and when the culprit is finally captured he (Of course it is always a boy. Girls go scot free for the same offense that in a boy would be deemed unpardonable!) not infrequently defends himself; nay, more, sometimes even acting on the aggressive. Dignified? No, I don't think so. I hardly believe she is capable of inspiring any one with a wholesome degree of awe, nor do I wonder that she is afraid to whip a pupil and trembles for the consequences when she does it.

Mr. Smith was the next speaker, and he declared without any hesitation that "Whipping does no good anyway. It does not last and doesn't mean anything while it does last." Verily, in his hands it would not. He is second assistant in Senior School No. 2, and his boys — yes, and girls too — run right over him; and in his hands a rod would be about as effectual as rosewater in a revolution! Why, only last week his botany class — young ladies from fourteen to eighteen, with a few boys sprinkled in — demanded half a day out, in which to look up specimens; and when he ventured the feeble remonstrance that it was "too early yet, in the season," one of them cheerfully confided the fact that "You might

as well say 'Yes' first as last, for we are all going to the matinée this afternoon and the botany was only an excuse!" And they went without further parley! Fancy *him* trying to bring any one to time! Some people are bold enough to suggest that he ought to be discharged for his incompetency (the very last thing in the world to discharge a teacher for), but they are in blissful ignorance of the political chain surrounding our school system here, of which he is an important link. Somebody might lose a vote if he were discharged, and so, perchance, lose an opportunity to feed at the public crib! You surely did not suppose we were really hired from the sole standpoint of merit? Ah, no. This is a progressive age, and that plan like other obsolete customs is "more honored in the breach than in the observance." Some of us would not be retained very long if it were otherwise, although very comfortable as it is, knowing that the political influence of our friends will not be ignored.

Blessed be the ballot box, containing as it does the expression of every American voter's unbiased opinion! Few, indeed, among our number who are not indebted to it both for position and salary. Long may it wave! But I digress. Let me find myself before I get too far lost.

Miss Sigourney was the next speaker. Her reputation is that of a rigorous disciplinarian. It is an unquestioned axiom that "Force without justice is tyranny"—and judged by this standard she is no less a tyrant of to-day, than was Nero of old, except in degree, she never losing the grasp on her whip nor an opportunity of using it. To be sure she has an unruly set of pupils who sometimes break out into open rebellion — but I'm not at all sure that she is not at least in a measure responsible for it herself. Certainly,

nothing can be more brutalizing in its effect than the continued sight and sound of retribution administered to those who are powerless to help themselves, even when an actual injustice is being shown — as must sometimes be the case where the application is so frequent; and occasional mutiny may be looked for, where the teacher is at war with child-nature. Of course she advocated the free use of Solomon's "Spare not," and that in terms not noted for any especial tenderness. There is cruelty in her mouth; vindictiveness in her eye; resolution in her tramp, and subjugation in her entire manner. It is enough to stir up all the old Adam there is in any one, simply to look at her. Perhaps the hardness of her features may be traced to the rocky, sterile soil of her early home; but it is doubtless augmented by her own daily practices which cannot but leave their marks. She looks like a person that has missed the best part of life — and has become calloused and fossilized by an experience that would have made some natures only the more sweet and womanly.

I was next called upon, and said with some trepidation that ridicule and sarcasm were as good instruments as any I had ever tried in the way of punishment. Miss Preston was on the opposite side of the room, but her impatience to speak was plainly visible; even at that distance I could see her eyes flash and her brows knit while waiting for her turn to come, and then how perfectly regal she looked as she denounced theory after theory! When she reached the climax I was fairly awed by her manner! Would I could give you the burning words just as they came from her lips — but I can scarcely do even faint justice to the ideas that must lose so much of their intensity in the printed page

and from whose freshness and originality so much is taken by repetition.

"Some of you argue," said she, "against corporal punishment because of its cruelty; but you advocate in its stead raillery, ridicule, sarcasm, and contempt. You are afraid to leave the marks of corporal punishment on the bodies of your pupils; but you do not hesitate to inflict on their souls wounds that can never be healed by any poultice save that of love and tenderness, and whose scars will last thro' life. If corporal punishment is pronounced brutal and degrading, what *shall* you say of mental punishment, which is so painful to sensitive natures and deadening to stubborn ones?"

"Perhaps Miss Preston will favor us with some suggestions," came from the Chair.

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. IV.

PUNISHMENT (*Continued*).

"Well, I do not believe entirely in the sugar plum system,' she said; "although I find but few who are not more easily led than driven; very few on whom kindness is thrown away. But I do sometimes find two classes of troublesome children: spoiled children, who have to be dealt with very firmly, although in all kindness; and neglected children, those who have no good home influences — these require gentler treatment, and in no case would I sneer at them. I would be very careful even how I rallied them, or made tools of their feelings for any purpose. A child's feelings are too delicate for rough or frequent handling. Bulwer touches upon this point when he says: 'Our feelings, especially in youth, resemble that leaf which is described by some old traveler as expanding itself to warmth; but when chilled, not only shrinking and closing but presenting to the spectator thorns which had before lain concealed upon the opposite side of it.' All punishment should depend, not only upon the offense itself but also upon the character and motive of the offender. We are too often ourselves to blame for the perverseness and disobedience of our pupils, by our lack of tact in administering censure when it becomes necessary; by the uncalled for and unwise parade of our suspicions, which frequently prove unjust; by the threats

which we make and do not mean to put into execution, and which we would not if we could; by the futile attempt to practice upon theories whose fundamental principles are not understood, as well as our neglect of those that are seen to be right, having been dictated with common sense for their basis; by our lack of self-control, without which no one of us has any right to assume the control of others; and by sacrificing ends to means in general."

We were spell-bound. Not one of us but felt the truth of her impressive home thrusts, and not one other that would have dared venture to make the same remarks.

"How *would* you govern bad children, then?"

"In two ways: Negatively — by not acting as though I thought that total depravity was a foregone conclusion and that I was elected to take vengeance for it; positively — by a firm belief in the possibility of reformation; by striving to aid its accomplishment through kindness, self respect, and trust. Like the old man in the spelling book, I would first try the effect of kind words; these failing I would use grass, and only as a last resort, stones."

"Then you would use corporal punishment occasionally?" (This from Miss Sigourney.)

"Yes — but only under the greatest restriction, and in a rational way and amount; generally in private, and but very seldom immediately after the offense."

"Why? Please give your reasons for the last two conditions."

"In private (unless the nature of the wrong requires public reprimand) both because it is too humiliating to the offender, and too hardening in its influence upon the rest. Not immediately, because in nine cases out of ten the real

reason we whip a child is because we lose our own temper, and by waiting we may find it. I do not say we should never be angry, for a righteous indignation is never out of place, if directed against anything cruel, mean, or dishonest; but if we wait a while, we shall see the extenuating circumstances, if there are any, and be more apt to administer justice with less of personal feeling. The very best strategy we can use in meeting any evil habit is to put in a good one to counteract it. Still, there may be natures that can be reached by nothing else so effectually as by a decent amount of whipping (only we must be too wise to be arbitrary or despotic). J. G. Holland must have met with just such a character before writing 'Nicholas Minturn,' as he describes in his inimitable way a boy of that class. The boy had been educated in the streets, and the spiritual pabulum he received in the Sunday School had been of the sickly, sentimental sort that had left him a complete bully, and a coward as well — the one characteristic usually accompanying the other. But it so happened that once upon a time he learned that there is such a thing as a limit to human patience, and the lesson was not lost. He had worried his Sunday School teacher during the entire session and then followed her home, snowballing her on the way. Reaching the front steps, she turned around and smilingly invited him to 'Come in.' He was nothing loth, having experienced just such a sugar-and-water return for his brutality to others before; so, slyly winking to a companion outside, and promising to divide the expected spoil, he entered with her. She ushered him into a luxuriously furnished parlor and bade him amuse himself while she went up stairs to lay aside her hat and cloak. He did so and became so thoroughly engrossed in

contemplation of the works of art and ornament before him, as well as by his own sense of smartness in having once more secured a premium for his abuse of kindness, that he did not know she had returned until he felt his head drawn back by the hair, held in a firm and unrelenting grasp by the lily white fingers of one delicate hand of his teacher, while she used the other, with some emphasis, on his face, leaving a wholesome sting after every blow. He was too much astonished to resent it, and when she dismissed him with a few incisive words, he left her presence a changed being in one respect, and her devoted champion ever after."

This brought the meeting to an end, as I must my letter, which is already too long, and I have not mentioned one word about the "Museum" yet! However, it will keep until you again hear from

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. V.

THE MUSEUM.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Aug. 18, 188–.

MR. ——— ———, State Supt. Public Instruction.

My Dear Sir: — Hoping that you can make use of this, in your talks with teachers, I want to tell you about our museum, for it certainly has been a wonderful "help" in our school, and mayhap some other teacher knowing of it may be persuaded to go and do likewise.

At the left of the hall as we enter our schoolroom is a closet which has been used as a sort of storeroom from time immemorial. Early in the fall term, while Miss Preston was yet a stranger, practically, she requested one of the boys to stay after school one night and help her. Now it so happened (or *did* she plan it for his benefit?) that he was one who, by his disobedient and unruly spirit, had given her numerous predecessors much trouble, both by his own conduct and by his evil influence over those who, if left to themselves would be harmless, but who are always foremost in a mob of any kind. So we were somewhat surprised at her selection, although as yet none of us had any idea of the nature or amount of help required by our principal, for Miss Preston is one of those rare wom—— spirits, I mean, who do not publish all their plans, even to their "dear five hundred" friends.

However, we were rather indifferent, for up to this time we subordinates had not felt any particular "kinship of soul" for the young stranger who had been given one of the best positions in the city—and that, too, right over the heads of so many of us who were older and whose years of faithful toil were thereby completely ignored; and we were not going to be surprised if she did spring a wasps' nest; nor would we offer one friendly suggestion to prevent any catastrophe which our peculiar talents for forecasting trouble had shown would be inevitable. All that we were waiting for was the opportunity to say calmly, but with none the less triumph: "I told you so!" (I may as well add, right here, that the golden opportunity never came, and we are now somewhat abashed to think we ever wished for it.)

But I am getting too far from that closet, which surprised us the next morning by its complete transformation. The blinds, heretofore closed, were now open; the window had been cleaned and was shaded by a pretty, although inexpensive, lambrequin of blue and gray cretonne; the shelves were also clean and covered with blue paper of the same shade as the lambrequin. The old brooms, kindling wood, coal scuttle, dust pan, waste paper, etc., that had always held undisputed possession of the floor, were nowhere visible. History has since revealed the fact—through the lips of the janitor—that they were banished to the furnace basement.

Miss Preston had not arrived when I entered the schoolroom, but James Moore soon came in (He always used to be "Jimmed," but Miss Preston never calls any of the pupils by any other than their proper names. She says it is not courteous, nor respectful to the wish of those who gave them the name, and that it has a tendency to lower the tone of a

child's morals by lessening its self-respect; and gradually we have left off substituting "Maggie, Matie, Sammy, Tom, Dick, and Harry," for Margaret, Mary, Samuel, Thomas, Richard, and Henry); and then the questions plied loudly and rapidly. At first he evaded them, but when Agatha Breese said in her contemptuous way: "If you were much of a gentleman you would not treat a lady's questions in this way;" he straightened himself up and said, with more manliness and force of character than I ever saw him exhibit before:

"I am too much of a gentleman to betray anybody's confidence. Miss Preston did not consider it necessary to ask me not to tell her plans; and as she trusted me, I mean to show myself worthy of it;" and such is the power of one strong will in a crowd that not another question was asked, although such exclamations as "I wonder," "I guess," and "I hope," were numerous.

We had not long to wait, however, for just before recess that day she struck the signal for "Order," and then said:

"My dear pupils, I have a plan in which I hope you will be interested, as it may become a source of much pleasure as well as profit. You doubtless see and hear of many things, every day, both in nature and art, which you do not fully understand, some, perhaps, of which you know nothing; and I propose to make use of our closet as a cabinet or museum, to hold such specimens as you may collect from time to time for study and classification. We will have each article properly labeled and catalogued with as full a description as we can obtain. I have provided a large blank book for that purpose and mean to divide the work of keeping the entries among those of you who wish. As

a beginning I have brought, for contribution, a few things which you are at liberty to examine and talk about during recess."

So saying she placed on her desk a piece of coral, a stick of sealing wax, some cotton seeds, and a pod containing a small quantity of cotton, a chromo, some steel filings, a whale's tooth, some silver ore, a slate pencil, and a piece of mahogany.

The "Museum," as a matter of course, became the chief topic of conversation from that moment, and when the pupils returned after the noon intermission, they were laden with specimens for it from things common and familiar, and some that were not as well known. Intelligent thought was awakened, and the pupils thought, talked, and read, *to some purpose.* Spare moments have been spent by all of us in a diligent search for information in dictionaries, cyclopædias, works of natural history, the sciences, etc., and now the collection has become a large and really valuable as well as interesting one, having had several contributions from those outside of the school, who had become interested by seeing or hearing of it.

And the Museum has helped govern our school, providing occupation for the mind and body, filling up time that might have been spent in idleness or in plotting mischief, and finally by knitting together in warm friendship the hearts of pupil and teacher, those who, alas! too often stand in the lamentable position of antagonists. Think you the child who is called upon to assist or allowed in any way to participate in things of this kind will betray the confidence of the teacher whose love and wisdom originated it? I tell you "Nay." *There is no such thing as total depravity.*

"But does it pay?" I heard Miss Wood ask of Miss Preston last spring. "You are looking worn and thin, and all this extra work seems to me like giving 'too many oats for a shilling;' it will never be appreciated outside of your pupils — doubtful if even *they* do so before they are forty; and the trustees will never make the humane discovery that you are working beyond your strength, as well as beyond your salary."

Tears actually stood in Miss Preston's eyes as she replied softly: "Yes, it pays a thousand-fold, if by this means even one child is brought into closer communion with Nature, and led to a higher conception of the Infinite Wisdom that planned and created it for our use and enjoyment. As for myself, *it is my work.* I love it and have chosen it—because I love it — in preference to everything else; and anything that I can do to promote the welfare of my school is not too dear, even at the expense of some of my time and strength beyond the six hours per diem for which I am legally responsible."

And right here I must add, in justice to the above-mentioned gentlemen, the trustees, that at their July meeting, they, voluntarily and without a hint from any one, increased Miss Preston's salary for the coming year, making it nine hundred instead of seven hundred dollars. Verily, all trustees are not deaf as well as blind, nor are all their hearts ossified! (Teachers will please make a note of this discovery. EDITOR.)

But I must tell you "how" and then close. Our closet is eminently suitable for the purpose, having a window at one end, a door at the other, and shelves on either side with cupboards beneath them. Pasteboard of different

colors has been used for cutting out letters to designate the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, and the specimens are grouped accordingly, numbered, and the corresponding number placed in the catalogue, together with the date of entry, name of the contributor, and as complete a description as can be obtained. Many of the children have note books, in which they write about anything that specially pleases or interests them, and thus the foundation is laid for many a composition — which, by the way, Miss Preston succeeds in getting from all her pupils without any of the usual "scuffles" over it.

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. VI.

RESPONSIBILITY.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Sept. 29, 188–.

MR. —— ——, Supt. Public Instruction.

My Very Dear Sir: — Miss Preston always seems to have an idea that the schoolroom should be made and kept not only clean and comfortable but pleasant; and her innovations in this direction have been simply wonderful — at the same time they have been so wonderfully simple that they may be brought about by any teacher who will act upon Mrs. Chick's advice to Mrs. Dombey, and "Make an effort, Louisa!"

So far as I personally am concerned I do not believe it essential to correct parsing that every atom of dirt be rendered invisible; nor can I see any relation between apple cores and paper wads on the floor and ceiling and idleness, whispering, mischief, and unlearned lessons. But then, I'm no logician, and Miss Preston is, and when she begins to reason about cause and effect, and to bring tangible and incontrovertible proof to substantiate her argument, I am obliged to acquiesce — or seem to, at least. "A man convinced against his will," etc.

Nearly a year ago I was much surprised to hear Miss Preston tell Mr. Johnson that she wanted some new curtains, a thermometer, and a waste paper basket for her schoolroom.

He opened his eyes, rather at the character than at the number of her requests, then blandly informed her that he'd refer her items to the "committee on incidentals"—and would you believe it? In less than a week she had all three! They called a special meeting to consider her wants, and cited her to appear and state her reasons for the same.

"Curtains!" said Mr. Seeley, "are there no blinds to your windows?"

"Yes, sir. But when they are open the light is so strong as to be dazzling; and when closed, they not only make the room too dark, but they also hinder ventilation. I have observed that many of the older pupils are near-sighted; and I wish them to have as good light as is possible, for I believe that much of this trouble is due to the poor or insufficient light at school. Many, too, show indications of catarrh and lung trouble, and these are always aggravated by impure air. I find the sunlight a very necessary auxiliary in keeping the children well and cheerful while at their work; but at times it needs to be somewhat moderated in its intensity, and this is best done by means of a light cloth shade that will not exclude the light."

After a short whispered conversation they voted a unanimous "Aye" to that request.

"But what in the world do you want of a thermometer?"

Without showing the least annoyance she explained that also:

"As my duties keep me on my feet and give me more or less exercise, I am not the best judge of the temperature proper for those who are sitting and whose circulation is therefore imperfect. That hinders digestion, causing headache, etc. We do not expect a chain to support a greater

weight than will its weakest link; and when a child's physique is dwarfed, stunted, or weakened, we need not look for activity of brain."

That argument proved a clincher, and when Mr. Holbrook reported favorably on that matter, he suggested mischievously:

"I suppose you have some sanitary reason for wishing a waste paper basket, too, or is it merely a moral one?"

"Both," she replied promptly. "Cleanliness is not only 'next to godliness,' but is also one of the first and best means of preserving health. Consistency would prevent me from insisting on personal neatness among my pupils, if my floor were allowed to become untidy. Besides, the habits of childhood and youth go with us through life, and a teacher has a grave responsibility in helping form those habits."

She had scarcely finished when Mr. Russell, as chairman of the committee, exclaimed:

"You shall *have* the basket, Miss Preston, and the curtains, and the thermometer, or anything else you want for your school while I have a dollar in my purse. If we have finally found a teacher who will really show some interest in the pupils beyond a salaried or text-book interest, we will stand by her to a unit."

He sat down and Miss Preston spoke again:

"Teachers are not always so indifferent as they seem; but they are sometimes in error as to where the duties of parents leave off and their own begin. They do not want to seem officious, and if Edward comes to school with unwashed face and uncombed hair, they are diffident about speaking of it, for fear of hurting some sensitive mother's feelings —

forgetful, mayhap, that Edward's mother has a family of several to look after and that, in the multiplicity of duties incumbent upon her, she almost necessarily neglected to look out for Edward's finger nails, teeth, etc., but who at the same time would be glad to know that her little boy was receiving a proper education upon this subject, as well as upon the boundaries, capital, and government of his country."

"True, Miss Preston. And yet our experience has led us to believe that as a rule teachers think their duties ended with the lessons in the text books, forgetting that the great lessons of life are not found therein. They are 'hired' at so much per annum, so many hours per diem, and for such and such purposes. These conditions fulfilled to the letter, they have no further interest in the young immortals committed to their care, and to whom they stand in *loco parentis*."

"Now I do not think you do us justice as a class, although I am aware that some enter the profession without any appreciation of the responsibilities or opportunities for good that are theirs. But is this not true in every walk of life? Does every physician realize that he may be a home missionary? Will every lawyer plead only on the side of justice? Does every editor use his voice and pen only for right? There are laborers and shirks in every vineyard; and of course, our calling is not an exception."

Well — since then our schoolroom has been literally transformed by pictures, brackets, plants, and a *careful janitor*. And yet there was no friction about it. It came about in the most natural way imaginable. Miss Preston one morning brought a jar containing a pink primrose in blossom, and put it on the window stool. After school one of the girls

asked if she might water it, and on receiving permission, said:

"If you'd like a Madeira vine to train around this south window, I'll bring you one in the morning."

And she did. Then some one brought a fuchsia, another a geranium; and so the leaven worked until every window was made beautiful with the "Green things growing" of which dear Dinah Muloch sings.

Later she brought a dozen illuminated mottoes, and hung them on the walls; then came a picture from one of the boys, tendered half shyly "to help" as he said. Others followed, lending what they had not permission to give. And the contents of the waste paper basket were stored in the basement in barrels, and at the end of the term *sold* to buy more pictures! Economy and æsthetics, all by means of a fifty cent basket!

What is the effect of all this?

No *truancy* for one thing. One lady tells about her boy of twelve years crying because his father kept him out of school during the busy week preceding the holidays, to help in his store.

Good lessons and learned without urging is another result. The children hunger and thirst to know.

And a strong, warm bond of friendship between teacher and pupil is another result. "Governing" is easy, and the whole machinery moves without a jog.

I meant to tell you about her daily "Five Minute Lectures" on etiquette, current news, science, books, etc., but can not now.

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. VII.

GEOGRAPHY.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Oct. 13, 188–

MR. —— ——, State Supt. Public Instruction.

My Dear Sir: — Of a truth "great minds run in the same channel," for the subject under discussion at our Teachers' Meeting in September was that of Geography, and behold, when I received your last favor it contained the call for our experience on that topic. I had been wishing for an excuse to give you, in epitome, Miss Preston's ideas on that very subject, and now believe that the excuse is no longer lacking.

The teachers in the primary grade were first called upon, then the junior, intermediate, senior and grammar school teachers — for geography is taught on each separate round of the ladder, not excepting the High School. Miss Preston had charge of the meeting that day, and consequently said nothing, as one after another arose to give his or her experience — for that is how our conferences are being conducted now — nor did she take any part in the "free parliament" which follows each one's speech, essay or paper. By request of Mr. Johnson, however, she came in beautifully on the "Amen" end of the question, somewhat as follows:

Fellow Teachers:

It has always seemed to me that too much time is spent in teaching geography. We begin it in the Primary Depart-

ment and continue it throughout the entire graduating course, increasing the dose each year, "according to the age of the patient," as the medical prescriptions read, until by the time the boy or girl is ready for the High School, he or she has consumed many hours in swallowing geography that should have been given to something else.

Again; it is made of too much importance. Geography might be easily taught as an incidental, which is all it is. In teaching history the places referred to should be looked up and as much as possible learned from maps, cyclopædias, etc., by the pupils. This knowledge should be supplemented by the teacher — every teacher being a complete storehouse of geographical as well as other knowledge — and questions asked that will elicit what they have learned. So in reading. If the reading lesson refers to any country or product or people, or to any natural or political division of land or water, the lesson should not be considered "finished" merely because well read, and the definitions — usually "blind leaders of the blind" — promptly given; but a careful description should be given by the teacher who should call for a written or oral report of the same next day by the class. Geography, as a secondary matter, may be combined with many other studies, and successfully taught and learned with comparatively little waste of time.

Again; there is too much "book geography" and too little real. There are too many *verbatim* recitations required about things but half understood. I visited a summer school during my last vacation, where the first class that recited after my entrance was one in geography — eleven little boys and girls who answered, glibly and perfectly, about the products and exports of Brazil, and who correctly

gave the boundaries and capital cities of nearly every South American division.

Evidently the teacher was very proud of the parrot-like recitations, for she turned to me with glowing cheeks and flashing eyes, inquiring if I did not "think they do pretty well for so young children?" "I do not remember that they have varied by a hair's breadth from the text," I replied. "Nor would they if you were to begin at the first page and question them up to where they are now studying," she replied proudly.

I was *horrified!* Cramming a child's memory with words which he does not understand, facts which are beyond his comprehension, and dates and figures that have no meaning in them except as so much mental torture for nothing!

"Try it," she urged, "ask anything you like."

I shrank instinctively for I knew that the result would be confusing to the pupils and embarrassing to her, if I stepped ever so slightly from the path of rote work. She persisted, and I turned in despair to a thin faced, white haired little boy whose bright eyes and quick, nervous movement had first attracted my attention, and later, whose prompt, decisive replies had called out an encomium from his — shall I say it? — injudicious teacher.

"You are the little boy who recited about the products of Brazil," said I, "now can you tell me what you mean by 'products?'"

He began an enumeration of the products again, but I said:

"No; you do not understand me, I think. When you speak of 'products' what do you mean?"

"Those are the products I just told you," he reaffirmed.

"Yes, that is true; but if I ask you to tell me what the word means, will you explain it to me? Play that I am a little girl and do not know anything about that big word. Can you help me understand it?"

He was silent, but smiled faintly at the idea of *playing* anything in school. Presently a little hand went up on the seat next to his, and I said to the little girl who raised it:

"Perhaps Julia will tell me?"

"Please, ma'am, the products is the answer we get by multiplying in our arithmetics," was the timid response, and a look of uncertain triumph at Henry.

I did not despair — but is it not pitiful that teachers do not make things more *real* to their pupils? Page after page is memorized mechanically — and *is of no use.* I have my doubts about giving children a text book at all for this study; certainly not until they are old enough to appreciate the reason *why* the Mississippi River flows into the Gulf of Mexico, as well as the fact that it is so.

"What, then, is your plan?" inquired Miss Sigourney.

"Well, I would have maps and charts on the wall for ready reference in each department. I would have books of history, travel and description from which I would give them 'bits' of geographical instruction. I would have scrap books filled with pictures of places and people, and newspaper items of important information about different lands. I would have boxes of photographs and stereoscopic views of as many cities, noted places, etc., as I could gather. I would teach by map drawing; by comparing one country with another, the past with the present, etc., never omitting to find and give the *reason* for the barrenness, fertility, heat, cold, productions and general expression of any

place mentioned or referred to in each lesson of each class. I would once in a while substitute a 'talk' about the civilized countries of this century for some other lesson. Another time it might be the discoveries; and again — if the pupils were old enough to take it in — the governments. In this way they may not learn the name of every unimportant city, town and village of every European or Asiatic state, and they may not be able to pronounce every difficult Russian name; but they *will* be able to give a reason for the difference in character, civilization and progress when there is a difference in the natural conditions. They may not learn to 'bound' every State in our own country to a nicety, but they *will* be able without any trouble to tell why the Eastern States were settled first; why the climate varies in different sections and how it affects the inhabitants; and they will have had time to learn how to care for their own *bodies*, as well as brains, which is more than they do now; at least I suppose the universal plea 'want of time' is the only reason we, as teachers, do not more frequently give *practical* lessons in diet, dress, bathing, exercise, etc., to our pupils. While they are young there is too much geography to leave time for such specific instruction, and as they become older it is a smattering of a dozen different sciences that prevents the same thing; and as a consequence we send out 'the halt, the maimed and the blind' with a memory crammed with dates and facts concerning things of no practical value in their after every-day life, and a blissful (wicked) ignorance of the laws that govern their own being."

What enthusiasm followed! Honestly, I don't believe that one of us had ever once thought we were wasting time

that did not belong to us by compelling the memorizing of whole pages of book after book — for as Miss Preston says "There are from three to six books in each series, and the young child is given the first book — learns it; — then gets another containing the same thing elaborated — *learns* it; then gets another and so continues term after term."

Well, I ask you, in all sincerity, and earnestly hope for a satisfactory answer: what *is* the use of all this minutiæ? *Would* fewer details and more general information be better? Would parents appreciate the difference in expense, and "take stock" in the utility of substituting home training for half the usual amount of time devoted to geography — or would they feel that Johnnie was being neglected by his teacher if he came home some night, eager to impart his newly acquired information that "I must not take my coat off after running or getting real warm, for my pores are all open then, and I would take cold" — even if he had not learned how many square miles there are in England — or some other place (without any definite idea of what a square mile *is*) or the height of some distant mountain, or the length of some unnavigable river?

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. VIII.

TEACHERS' EXAMINATIONS.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Nov. 15, 188–.

MR. —— ——, State Supt. etc.

My Dear Sir: — In these days we are looking forward to our teachers' meetings with feelings entirely different from those we used to experience. We are now sure of learning something that will be a help in our daily work, and no more time is wasted on dull statistics, nor on flights of rhetoric as useless as they are brilliant. I will tell you how another wonder has been accomplished by Miss Preston. I refer to the change effected in our annual examinations — teachers' examinations, I mean.

It is not within the memory of the deponent when it hath not been the custom to "toot the horn" — that is, to give notice per daily paper — for the assembling of the teachers in the Town Hall for examination. Mr. Johnson is the conductor, and the members of the "Board" sit apart on the stage, grand and silent witnesses of the erudition of our learned Superintendent. To them he is the very embodiment of knowledge, and I verily believe that at times he himself wonders — not that he knows so little, but how "one head can contain it all!"

Miss Preston came once last year, but "fired up" when Mr. Johnson handed her papers back to her marked "99½," and asked very calmly:

"How often is this required of us?"

"Only once a year," he replied.

"And what is its object?" she pursued.

"Why — why — it is a provision of the Board, for the purpose of seeing that all who have been appointed are qualified for their positions."

"But how does this show whether they are or are not qualified?"

"Why, all who fall below the average standard of 75 per cent are dismissed, and those who reach it are retained."

"Who prepares the questions?"

"*I* do," said he testily, yet pompously; "are they not all right?"

"O, yes, certainly. They seem admirably adapted for the puzzle column of a variety newspaper, or as a basis for the game of Twenty Questions.'"

"What *do* you mean, Miss Preston? Please explain your criticism."

"Simply this, then. The questions are not practical, are irrelevant and, as a rule, have no bearing on our daily work, either in theory or practice; and hence they cannot be a criterion by which to judge of personal qualification; and by adopting it you not only lose some good teachers, but must also retain some that are good for nothing but to repeat dates, facts and figures in a machine-like way, as a phonograph or a well drilled parrot may do."

"For instance?"

"Well, for instance: you ask us to name the sovereigns of England chronologically. Good. This we should be able to do, but suppose that in the rush of earnest strife to learn the best methods of meeting the wants of our classes, that

item of history has been buried under the accumulation of things more important. Will its loss prevent us from explaining the use of capital letters and the decimal point, or will its possession be of any use in seeing that our school-room is properly heated and ventilated?

Again; you call our attention to historical characters whose ashes long since helped fertilize the earth and vitiate the air, but you ignore the great topics of our own time and our own Government You call for Latin declensions, and do not ask by what methods we are seeking to teach the Queen's English to those who must use it hundreds of times where they will use Latin once. You do not ask how, as individuals, we teach one topic, nor by what means we promote the personal interests of our pupils.

What difference will it make to our Board of Education though I can solve every problem in Euclid, and yet have no solution of the greater one: 'How can I best govern that headstrong boy of twelve, or that impertinent miss of fourteen?' Would not a more complete demonstration of my fitness for my special position be shown if I am called upon to specify the needs of my own school, and asked to prove that I could adapt myself to their supply, rather than by a mechanical repetition of Kepler's Three Laws, or by a familiar acquaintance with the most abstruse topic in mental philosophy? We are dealing with boys and girls, the every day material whose product is men and women. The minds we seek to educate, to guide, are immature, unformed —not to be treated like that of a profound scientist or well drilled philosopher."

"Possibly you can suggest a better plan. Let me hear you."

"In the first place, then, a conscientious teacher needs no such stimulus to keep pace with the times. Her school, with its great and varied needs, will be uppermost in her thoughts, and her powers will be concentrated in the constant effort to do her entire duty by it. All other occupations, aims and ambitions will be of secondary importance and made subservient to it.

Second, *a visit to the school* is the best examination patron, trustee, or superintendent can give a teacher. There the work will speak for itself, and by that alone should a teacher be commended or condemned. And again; if there *must* be examinations, let them be confined almost exclusively to the work before us."

"Why, that would involve an examination of teachers from each grade separately."

"Certainly; why not? Professor Lowell is teaching mathematics only, and that to young men and women of mature minds. His examination should be far different from that of my assistant here, who is dealing with childhood and elementary studies. Radicals, Cube Root and the Metric System have positively no business in her department; so why not let her devote all her time and energy to bringing her own work to perfection? If we want the latest publications we do not look for them in a hardware store, nor do we visit a lawyer's office to see the newest fashion plates. We are more consistent in nearly everything pertaining to our every day life than in that which concerns our schools and teachers."

She is too much for him every time, and I guess she's right generally, although at first I had my doubts. But our "civil service reform" has begun in earnest, and now we

are having better evidence of the eternal fitness of each teacher for his or her special department. No senseless cramming, in view of the much dreaded examination on topics entirely foreign to our work, but study — healthy study — to adapt the means at hand to the end in view, and more thoughtful, earnest work among us all.

Perfection is not yet attained. There is still too much machine work, putting the pupils at the upper end of an inclined plane, giving a push and setting them going; but, Mr. Superintendent, we *are* trying, we *do* care and are hoping for good results from our united efforts.

More anon from

Yours Very Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. IX.

PRIZE GIVING.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Dec. 20, 18—.

MR. —— ——, Supt., etc.

My Dear Sir: — We had long ago decided to give up our November meeting to the discussion of prize giving, and we did so to our mutual profit. Mr. Johnson occupied the chair, and we each spoke as the spirit moved us. Miss Wells threw down the gauntlet by rising and saying with a flash:

"I believe in giving prizes, because it stimulates the children to do their very best, and renders urging unnecessary. Then, too, it gives the school something to work for."

"I am not so sure," said Miss Preston, "that the reasons you urge in its favor are not the very ones why it is injurious. It *does* stimulate the children, surely; that is, a certain portion of them; others it discourages, perhaps the very ones, too, who need the most encouragement but who are disheartened from the outset by the idea that a prize is to be given; only one or two can get it, and there are dozens in school who are more likely than themselves to merit it, and therefore there is no use in their trying. And by calling it 'giving the school something to work for,' we dress in very pretty words a painful fact; for, in nine cases out of ten, the prize itself becomes the object for which they strive, forgetful of better purposes."

Mr. Lowell arose as Miss Preston resumed her seat, and said:

"I am surprised. I supposed Miss Preston was a firm believer in the doctrine of rewards and punishments. I have heard her argue something fully as orthodox in principle as prize giving. I adhere to it, because it is less trouble than to manage any other way. I offer the prize, on such and such conditions, and have no further responsibility as to who wins or loses. It is their own lookout."

"Yes," said Miss Preston indignantly; "we are always ready to shirk our responsibilities, even in so comparatively small matters as this. But can we? Will we not be held responsible, in a measure at least, for the feelings of envy, discontent, and discord that are fostered and cultivated by our action in this? I do believe in judicious rewards and punishments, but *not in indiscriminate ones.* I would not hold out to a school as an inducement to do well any thing that could not be shared by all."

Mr. Johnson began to look interested. "How then would you manage? You could not very well give prizes to all. Your salary would be insufficient."

Miss Preston laughed. "I am not afraid of going to the poor-house, because of the little I might spend in giving my school a simple pleasure; and ways enough will suggest themselves to every teacher whose heart is in the work."

"Please be specific, Miss Preston," said Miss Wood, "for I have been in the habit of giving prizes every year, and have become somewhat dissatisfied with the general results. If there is any better way I want it."

"Any way seems 'better' to me than one which draws comparisons, however indirectly, as this method does. It has

the effect of making the successful (if I may use that adjective in this connection) child vain of its own attainments, by being the recipient not only of the prize but of the remarks and notice which follow — and as a rule a prize winner becomes self-satisfied and self-sufficient to such a degree as almost to preclude better influences, even sometimes causing a cessation from further effort; and the others are needlessly made jealous of the successful child or painfully morbid concerning their own stupidity, when in fact they may not be nearly as dull as the one who received the prize; or when, as happens in many instances, those who do not get the reward only lose it because they are more conscientious. For instance: I offer a prize to my arithmetic class, to be given to the one who has the most perfect lessons. Fanny is glib, and has a memory which assists in perfect recitations, together with an easy conscience which permits her to answer 'Perfect' at roll call if she has not missed any question, although she knew that she would miss if certain other questions had been asked. George, in the same class, is somewhat slow of speech, perhaps slow to understand, but industrious and faithful. Then too, 'perfect' has a fullness of meaning for him that has never entered into the heart of Fanny; and, although he has spent more real work on the lesson than she, he is too conscientious to say 'Perfect' even if he has answered every question that was given him. He is not content, with his superficial knowledge of the lesson, to call it perfect, even for the sake of the prize which he must see pass into the hands of one whom he knows is no more deserving than himself."

"You do not think, then, that a teacher will gain the love of his pupils in this way?" queried Mr. Johnson.

"Certainly not. Do you necessarily love the one who pays what is justly your due? By no means. If you make a coat or boots, a chair or machine for a person, *you earn your pay;* but it does not follow that you have any affection for the one who offers so much for so much. So children who get prizes receive them as their honest due, if honestly gained; and the giver has little or no place in their consideration.

Besides, I do not think it wise to inculcate a belief that a child should be paid for doing his best. It lowers the standard of 'Right for right's sake,' and gives the impression that right is the exception, wrong the rule."

"And what would you offer in place of prize giving?"

"Free communion and association between teachers and pupils. I would gain their love and sympathy by entering into their duties and pastimes outside of school. I would show myself their friend, by my interest in their individual selves, not only at school during study hours and in their classes; but on the play-ground, at recess, at home, on the street, *everywhere.*"

Much more was said, pro and con, but I shall leave it to report some other time, for I want to tell you how Miss Preston manages, as she is too modest to even speak of her own peculiar methods, even in our Association. She *doesn't* give prizes, but she does give *pleasure;* pleasures that fall "alike upon the just and unjust" and forever prevent any criticism for showing partiality. The only distinction she ever makes is to give special attention to the poor, the repulsive, the most disagreeable ones — those who are the most friendless, by reason of their condition or conduct. But how? Well, for instance, last year there was an unusual

number of poor children in our ward, which is largely settled by a foreign population — many of them day laborers; and some of them even worse than that, having no steady employment, and *some* miserable drunkards. As the holidays approached and we were all busy talking over our plans for Christmas, Miss Preston said to me one day: "I *would* like to do something for my school for Christmas. Many of them will not have a thing to make the day memorable; and some of them I'm afraid will suffer from cold and hunger."

"What is your plan? I'd like to help" — for by that time I had begun to appreciate her and to care more for my classes.

"Come home with me to-night," said she, "and we will talk it over." I did. On the way she stopped at a confectioner's and ordered twenty-five pounds of candy, assorted, pure, and of the best quality. Next she bought a large basket of corn to pop and she engaged a big boy whom she saw on one of the street corners to do the work for her. After tea, I helped her put the candy into white paper cornucopias, which we rolled up; seventy-five of them, one for each child.

The day that school was to close for our week's vacation, she asked the children if they knew what anniversary would be celebrated the following Sunday, and after a little talk she read a Christmas poem to them, and I read a Christmas story. A knock at the door was answered by her, and old Santa Claus himself came in, bearing a huge basket on each arm. He was invited to a place on the stage, from whence he informed the wondering children that he visited them by request of their teachers, etc., etc.

I can not picture the enthusiasm that prevailed; nor can

any one say where the influence of her happy thought will end, for, as each boy and girl received a package of candy and a dish of pop corn, there was no jealousy, no bitter feelings of strife or envy — nothing but pure love, such as is felt by the Christ whose birth is celebrated each returning year. I do not know which was the happier, teacher or pupils. I only know that she makes the most of her opportunities to do them good. She goes on little fishing, nutting, and flower-hunting excursions with them, and each of these she makes an occasion for instruction of some sort; and I know that many a boy is indebted to her for his real politeness of manner, and many a girl owes to her her pleasant recognition of the small courtesies of life. Two or three weeks since, when we had our first fall of snow, she hired horses, drivers, and long sleighs enough to take her entire school, including myself and classes, for an afternoon's ride.

Do these things pay? Yes, she is paid every day, by the progress of her school — by their devotion to her, and by their higher moral standard; for her character has not been without its effect on their moral perceptions.

There is much more of which I would like to tell you, but have not time. One thought, however, comes to me more and more frequently, Why are not more teachers like her? Why am *I* not? (Rather why *was* I not, for by association with her so long I am taking on some of her methods, although I can never hope to attain to her hight.) Why did I never think of these things before? Why were not my own teachers of this sort? Is she a *rara avis?* If so, *why?*

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. X.

NUMBER.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., January 16, 188–.

MR. —— ——, State Supt. Public Instruction.

My Dear Sir: — I am glad that some one wants to know how Primary Arithmetic should be taught, as that is just what interested us at our Teachers' Meeting in December. We are actually learning *how* to teach.

I will not give all the old stereotyped "methods" advanced by some of our number, as all gave way before Miss Preston's better ones. Mr. Johnson had seen one of the trustees where she taught several years ago, and had been told by him that she was the most successful teacher of primary studies they had ever known; and this gave Mr. Johnson an excuse for calling her out. He is really waking up to her great value, and seems to depend upon her suggestions. His questions elicited something like the following:

"Our first object should be to *get down to the child.* It is a long step from their plane of vision to ours, and we should so express ourselves as to be at once understood by the little ones. Then we will follow Pestalozzi's laws 'From the concrete to the abstract; from the known to the unknown; from the simple to the compound,' and we shall have no trouble in teaching Primary Arithmetic, nor anything else.'

A chorus of voices clamored for illustrations, and after some hesitation she continued:

"Of course the first thing to be done is to teach them to count. This should be done concretely — never abstractly at first. We may begin asking how many hands each one has; how many feet, eyes, ears, noses, tongues, fingers, thumbs, etc. Then lines may be drawn upon the board, and they may count them as the teacher points to them, never allowing them to count more than the lines shown, nor faster than pointed out. This will give them instinctively, an idea of the *relative worth* of numbers — a very important item. Afterwards they may be allowed to count abstractly, and then drilled on the relative value of numbers by the teacher writing 8, 4, 3, etc. on the board; each time that two numbers are put thereon, asking them to tell which is of the greater value, and which the lesser. After a short time, they may call out when the teacher pronounces two numbers as, 12, 7. These exercises should always go backward also. For instance, when they have learned by the use of apples, pencils, fingers, beans, or stones to count four, they should be taught in the same way, by use of the same means, to count from four to one. Be very sure not to count from one to ten with apples, and then from ten backwards with something else. Use the same thing for each process, to prevent any confusion in the children's mind. After they have learned to count any number, and can distinguish the figure or figures that represent it, they may be taught to write the number themselves. For instance, I hold up three crayons; 'How many crayons have I?' 'Three crayons.' (Always insist on a complete answer. If they say 'Three,' in response to your question, you may ask

'Three what? Three cents?' and after a few illustrations of this kind they will get into the way of complete replies.) 'Very well, I will make the number on the blackboard and you may make it on your slates, You may each make three 3s, and John may go to the board and make his. Next time some one else may go.' How eager they will be, and how deeply interested! Dry and dull? Tired? Don't like to go to school? Hate numbers? No; these things you need never hear. Having learned to count, to read and write small numbers readily, I would teach addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of those numbers together."

"Why, Miss Preston! What a dreadful dose that would be," said Mr. Johnson.

"Not at all!" she replied with a smile. "I would not give a child a book with the 'table' of 8s, for instance, and compel him to learn '1 and 8 is 9; 2 and 8 is 10; 3 from 8 leaves 5; 6 times 8 is 48; 2 is contained in 8 4 times.' That *would* be a dose. So is any 'table' of abstract figures. All a child's early instruction should come through some bodily sense; hence, I would take the seeds, apples, stones or what not that we had been using, and select eight as they counted them. 'Now let us see what we can do with these eight apples.' Let them count, say two more from the general pile, and put them with the eight already counted. 'Now you may count them all.' This done, they have found for themselves the truth that '8 and 2 is 10.' It is a grand thing for them. Their eyes sparkle, and they are hungry for more. You may put the fact into form for them on the board, while they copy the same on their slates. Now, removing the surplus, two apples from the eight,

we will see what counting backwards from eight will do for us. 'Here we have the same eight apples. As you count I will take away two. We call this subtraction, because it means taking away. How many apples have we left?' Write on the board in the same manner as before and let the little ones follow on their slates, inspecting their work, giving hints as to size and shape of figures, use of signs, general appearance, neatness, etc. They have now learned that '2 from 8 leaves six,' therefore '2 and 6 *must be* 8; and only half the time has been used that would have been in the old way. Go right on with the same general form for multiplication and division, using two and eight as the numbers with which to work. One caution may be necessary right here: you may become so interested and enthusiastic yourself as to forget the wonderful smallness of the minds with which you are dealing, and give them too much at a time. Be very careful about this. Do not sacrifice quality to quantity. Let the lessons be short and frequent, and the progress will be rapid and satisfactory."

Verily, she was that moment a living exposition of her own words, for she sat down *tired out*, and each of her listeners had that tense, strained look of overwrought minds! It was like a new revelation to us! Teach in that way, with our whole soul and strength and mind and might? Teach without books, without the old ease of announcing a lesson, hearing it "recited," and then dismissing it without a further thought? Why, the perfect mastery of that one subject and the method of presenting it to the juvenile mind must have involved hours of patient study, such as we had never dreamed of giving to anything so commonplace! We did not wonder that she grew thin over her work, for

she put her very life into it. Nor did we wonder again that she was always spoken of as a "grand success!" nor that *she commands a salary* and is constantly promoted, while others are left to drone, dream and drudge over their work.

We have so many topics on hand for discussion that we contemplate semi-monthly meetings. But, I must close, for I want to read my new "Educational Report," so kindly sent by you, and see what I can there find for my school.

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XI.

PRIMARY ARITHMETIC.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Feb. 22, 188–.

MR. SUPERINTENDENT:

Since the subject of Arithmetic has been proposed for elucidation, and I have already given you a general idea of how Miss Preston starts the little ones up this "Hill Difficulty," it may be well for me to go on and tell you how the light from her lamp shone on my path and helped me over an otherwise trying place. It was when I first knew her, and before I had gained any confidence in her methods of teaching. I had taught so long, and in the old, stereotyped way, that I did my work mechanically and frowned upon innovations as upon a personal infringement. She came to the door of the recitation room one afternoon to invite me to take a walk. She's a rare pedestrian and makes it a daily exercise, generally walking several miles. I am getting in the way of it myself now, although at that time I had not realized its wonderful benefits as I have since. That day I was tired *and cross*, and had kept a little boy from one of the beginning classes after school, because he had failed to get his examples; and to his assurances that he did not understand them, I only vouchsafed the calm suggestion that he "must be very dull."

I would not "offend one of these little ones" by such ar

answer to their appeal for help to-day, but I was completely oblivious then to everything except the sense of drudgery which my work imposed upon me. I did not offer him any assistance, but cut the leaves of "A Reverend Idol" and coldly read while he pored over his book.

After waiting a few moments Miss Preston asked if she might speak with Henry, and I gave her an ungracious "Certainly." She ignored my manner, and sitting down at Henry's desk, talked with him something like the following:

Miss Preston. Are your examples very hard to-day?

Henry. They are not *very* hard, I guess, for the other boys all had them.

Miss P. Do you understand them?

H. No, ma'am; not when I have to take 8 from 3. I can do the other kind well enough, taking 3 from 8, and such, but I don't see how I *can* take 8 from 3.

Miss P. Ah, yes. I see your trouble. Now please hand me that tin cup by the water pail. I thank you. I want a drink from it, but I see that it is empty. What shall I do? I am very thirsty; but I cannot drink from an empty cup nor from one that has only *three drops* in it, for I need much more to quench my thirst.

H. (With animation.) Why, I can get some for you from the pail.

Miss P. But suppose the pail is empty?

H. Why then I would go to the faucet down in the base ment, and get a pailful.

Miss P. That wouldn't do any good. I only want a cupful.

H. Well, I can bring you a cupful from the pail, when it is full!

Miss P. Just so. Now let us see if we can not do the same in your example. You can't take 8 from 3; but perhaps we can *go to the pail* and fill our cup. Ah, no. Our next figure is a cipher. Our *pail is empty*. What shall we do? *Go to the faucet* of course, fill our pail and come back. Beyond our cipher stands a 4 on purpose for us to use. Now, if I take one of these hundreds, how many tens is it worth?

H. Why, ten tens.

Miss P. Good. Now instead of the cipher we have 10. We can fill the *cup* from the *pail*. So now we will take one of these tens (equal to ten units) and add it to the three units we already have, giving us 13 units. Now can you take 8 from 13?

H. Oh, yes, and it leaves 5. Why isn't that funny! It's just like a poor man without money, begging from some one with a pocketful.

Miss P. Just so. Now you have 3 to take from 9 where your cipher stood.

H. And it leaves 6!

Miss P. Now here is our 4, with a 2 below it. What will you do?

H. Why (after some meditation), 4 *gave away* part of his.

Miss P. Yes. How much has he left?

H. Why, 3. So we can say "2 from 3."

Miss P. Do you think you "see through" it now?

H. (With great enthusiasm.) Why, *yes*, ma'am. I can't help getting my examples now.

Which was true. And *I* couldn't help catching the fire, nor have I been able to keep out of it since. When we came to fractions she showed me how to illustrate the value

of numerator and denominator by *things visible*, apples, oranges, etc., until the facts were so plain I began to think I had never before half comprehended them myself.

So with compound numbers. Under her advice I borrowed a set of gill, pint, quart, and gallon cups at the hardware store and let the children learn for themselves the relative value of each measure, and then construct their own tables, backward as well as forward. For instance: we first filled the gallon measure and found it would fill the quart cup four times, so "1 gallon makes 4 quarts; 4 quarts make 1 gallon."

Actually, I borrowed small scales after that, and taught them to weigh, using sand, which Miss Preston calls "clean dirt."

So with everything — long, square, and cubic measure set them all to buying the penny tape measures, and finding the length, hight, and width, of everything in and around the school house and yard. And I was nearly as enthusiastic as they, and by practicing became expert enough to estimate the size of anything with a degree of accuracy hitherto unknown.

Order? No, I do not think my recitations were conducted with as good order (in the common acceptation of the word) as before — but *the pupils learned*, and have been learning ever since, until I have come to believe that the fairy "Order" has been grossly misrepresented, as a tyrant to whom it was necessary to sacrifice everything else. The order that prevails in my school now is of a far different (and I hope better) type than that which formerly compelled my pupils to sit in a stated position, and if called upon to recite to do it in one special way and in no other.

One more illustration of Miss Preston's genius in teaching arithmetic, and I will close. One of the teachers came to her the other day after our Association meeting, and said:

"Miss Preston, you spoke of having the children count backward as well as forward. Will you kindly illustrate?"

"With pleasure;" and turning right around to the blackboard she drew a flight of stairs in outline, placing a cipher on the lowest, a figure 1 on the next, 2 on the next, and so up to 10. All in less time than it takes to write it, she had continued:

"From 0 to 10 I call 'going up stairs;' from 10 to 0 'going down stairs.' It is a favorite illustration because simple, quick, and a pleasing conceit for the children; and they certainly learn to add, subtract, multiply, and divide numbers more quickly and with more intelligence by means of some such thing, than abstractly."

As they progress, she takes other numbers; for instance the stairs will be filled with 2 and its multiples—or 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, according to the previous development. The orders of units she illustrates by bundles of sticks, similar to matches in shape and size; ten in a bundle to represent units; ten bundles to represent tens, etc. She has "faculty;" and no matter what she teaches, she does so from the child's standpoint.

Oh, I want to tell you about her methods in teaching grammar, but cannot now.

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XII.

COMPOSITIONS.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., March 16, 188–.

STATE SUPERINTENDENT:

My Dear Sir:—Yes, sir; our February meeting discussed "Compositions," as you suggested, Mr. Johnson presiding. Mr. Lowell spoke first, and with more energy than I had ever before seen him exhibit:

"I hate the word, and dread composition day even more than my pupils do, if that is possible."

Miss Preston laughed softly, and then inquired if under those circumstances he was successful in obtaining good compositions?

"O, fair," he replied, "I think they are about as compositions average. I do not see the sense, myself, in insisting upon boys and girls writing compositions, when they have not half a dozen ideas among the whole class; and I have more than once petitioned that the subject be dropped from the course of study in my department."

"May I inquire about the method you use?"

"Certainly. In the first place I require one from each pupil every month. That gives me all the trouble I want with them, for it is like pulling eye-teeth to get a decent composition from some of them."

"Do they select their own subjects?"

"No, I tried that, but found it did not work satisfactorily. Nearly all were troubled to think of a subject, or what to say about it when they did."

"Who reads them?"

"Each one reads his own. I give them half an hour in which to write, and they spend the rest of the time in reading what they have written."

"And who corrects them?"

"Oh, we are none of us critical enough for that. It is hard enough to get the writing done in the first place, without worrying about it afterward."

"Just my mind," chimed in Miss Wood. "And I do not fancy trying to turn my school room into a shop for making poets and essayists. It involves more friction than anything else in my school, except my constant warfare on whispering."

Oh, how I longed to hear Miss Preston speak! Why our composition days are a real treat to us; and as for making drudgery of it — well, it is a pleasure. But Miss Wells was the next speaker.

"I think it is a good thing, myself, although I am not very successful in that line."

"How do you manage?" queried Mr. Johnson.

"Oh, Wednesday of each week is our 'Composition Day,' and I have a certain space on the blackboard where the subject is found written out for each week. I call for not less than about five hundred words, and impose a penalty for remissness."

Then Miss Preston inquired: "What is the usual style of your topics?"

"Last week we had 'The Pleasures of Memory,' and the

week before 'The Advantages of Education.' Next week we are to have 'Ambition.'"

"Do they do their own work?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean," said Miss Preston, slowly, "do they write out their own ideas of these abstractions, or do they merely copy the sentiments of some one else?"

"Oh, as to that, they undoubtedly get all the help they can from their friends. Indeed, I have known them to copy an article *verbatim* from print; but I am not bound to convict them without proof positive of their guilt, and in nine cases out of ten I cannot furnish this — even if morally certain that the articles are not their own."

"Then what is the object of the exercise? We only gain power by putting forth power, and if that is not done the object of writing compositions is lost."

"I have never entered into the question of effect in my plans for pupils," said Miss Wells, "but if any one can suggest an improvement on my way I am open to conviction."

Mr. Johnson looked doubtfully toward Miss Preston, and with some hesitation said: "Perhaps Miss Preston will help us out."

"I am not sure that I can," she replied with a smile; "but my impression is that we invest the exercise with too much formality. In the first place we select subjects entirely beyond the range of an ordinary child's thought, and then insist upon a set number of lines or words and say, 'Write.' By this we induce them to hate the work, and to cheat themselves by avoiding it; or, almost as bad, we permit them to write in a style entirely foreign to themselves. and one which is injurious in its effect on their habits of writing."

"How can we avoid these serious results?" queried our superintendent.

"You may well call them serious, and we must study how to avoid them. I do not think I have any set method; rather let the occasion make the method. For instance, if my history class has had a lesson of unusual interest or value, and I wish to impress it upon the minds of my pupils, I ask them to put their thoughts of the person, place or circumstance into words of their own. Sometimes they use their slates, sometimes the blackboard, and frequently it is an oral exercise. Then if I find it desirable to be more elaborate I ask them to copy them on paper, and after looking over and correcting them, I select one or more to be read in public at our next reception, and perhaps some will be requested for our weekly paper. So with my other classes. If my arithmetic class has surmounted a difficulty, it is easy for them to write of their struggle and of the victory gained. Sometimes the current events furnish better topics than anything else could; for instance, Garfield's assassination and death filled every pupil in my school at that time with unlimited food for thought. The recent floods in Pennsylvania have also been prolific of topics; the distress they have caused, the damage done, etc., etc. The great fire at Seattle and the Quebec disaster were equally useful in supplying themes for the juvenile pens. The unexpected results of the November election brought out political and temperance compositions by the score. I seldom give them an abstract subject—never without first preparing them for it by a familiar talk with them concerning the thing to be discussed, and I sometimes find it necessary to give them several days in which to look it up. Sometimes I read them a

short story or poem, and call for a paraphrase; but under all circumstances I would first seek to inspire them with interest and enthusiasm, and this done there is no trouble in securing ideas or the expression of them. My work is then to give them hints as to style, rules for capitalizing, etc."

Trouble in securing ideas, or their expression! I should think not, indeed! Why the one or two whose productions are selected for public reading are so highly honored by the distinction thus conferred upon them that each one strives to do his best. Then Miss Preston keeps a big drawer, on purpose for all the compositions that are given her by her pupils after she has corrected, and they copied, signed and dated them. For convenience, they are spread out in the covers of an old geography and are supposed to be free to exhibit to visitors who want to know how the school prospers; or they can be used for public or private rhetorical exercises, or for whatever purpose she deems best.

Miss Preston does not make a bugbear of the work, as most of it is voluntary; and if she assigns a topic to anyone, or to a class, it is because of their peculiar fitness for the theme, and their interest in it. She has been requested to bring some samples to our next meeting, and I know of several fine historical essays produced by her pupils last term, which I hope she will take.

But I must leave this interesting subject; and perhaps I can tell you more after our next meeting.

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XIII.

MANAGEMENT.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., April 4, 188–.

MY DEAR SUPERINTENDENT:

I think I must go away back to our January meeting, and take up a back stitch that proved valuable in our work, and which may help some half-discouraged teacher among your forces.

Mr. Johnson had previously announced that we would make a special study on that day of "How shall I best promote the interests of my school?" and requested us to give the subject our careful attention, and then bring to our Association a written answer to the query, supplemented by a brief statement of the reason why we thought that the true method. (You will observe that the tone of our meetings is somewhat more elevated than when they were merely places for reading statistics. Some thanks are due to you, for your talks and suggestions, as well as much, very much, to Miss Preston.)

Well, we were interested in studying out *why* we had succeeded, if we had, and the cause of failure if the best interests of our school had *not* been promoted by us; and at the appointed hour not one was "among the missing." A hat was passed for the literary contributions, which were

then read by the collector, and I herewith append a hasty synopsis of a few of the more characteristic ones.

"By strict discipline.

We are all rebels by nature, and once the law is not enforced, disorder prevails: the greatest obstacle to the best interest of any school."

We were somewhat surprised afterward to learn that this came from Mr. Lowell, noted as he is for his want of discipline.

"By maintaining our dignity.

This is preëminently the age and nation for hero worship. In the mind of the average child no one holds a higher place than his teacher, and if we succeed we must not allow 'familiarity' to 'breed contempt.'"

Another instance where theory and practice do not go hand in hand, for this came from one of our young lady teachers, who never understood the first principles of true dignity. Is it always so? Do we base our ideal theories upon what we feel that we lack in ourselves?

"By enforcing our rules.

Laws that are not maintained by penalties for their non-observance are mere nullities. Every school is a miniature kingdom, of which the teacher is ruler, and the pupils subjects, *nolens volens*."

A lively discussion followed this proposition, during which it was decided that in too many of the miniature kingdoms there are tyrants for rulers; that tyrants incite to rebellion; and that sugar plums may be as effective in some cases as cannon balls.

"By securing the coöperation of parents, pupils, and trustees with the teacher.

In union we find strength; in division weakness. If the elements are harmonized the whole will be symmetrical; but if the parts cannot be made to join, the superstructure is unsafe."

We recognized the personality of this key note, and all our

hearts responded to the sound of its music. Miss Preston was called upon to illustrate her meaning, which she did somewhat as follows:

"Perhaps I can best explain my idea by relating an experience of ten or twelve years since. I was young and a stranger to everyone in the little Village of M——, when I accepted a position there as teacher in the primary department of their Union School. The principal of the school was a middle aged man of dead ideas, always wearing an apologetic expression and seldom speaking of his school or patrons, except to whine at their indifference or to prophesy something dismal of the future. He pitied me for my enthusiasm when I proposed during the first month to invite the parents to visit my school. Said he:

'Why I have taught here nine years, and in all that time only six of the parents have opened the door; and they did it only to find fault with me for something I had done or left undone.'

'And do the trustees never come in?' I asked.

'Yes, when I send for them to substantiate my claim in some way. On any other occasion they send Mr. Hubbard, their secretary, to see if anything is needed; and as he is timid (?) he walks around outside of the building, and I'm not aware of his presence until his little dog comes bounding and barking into the hall, making the children titter. Then I know that his master is not far off and I hunt him up after school closes and have a talk with him.'

I confess it looked rather dubious, but I wrote letters of invitation to each of the trustees, and two for each pupil—one to be given to his parents, the other to his best friend, one hundred twenty in all. Then I called for volunteers

among the pupils to help entertain their friends with music, recitations, readings, etc., and *every child took a part.*"

"Did you succeed in getting any one out to your reception?" queried Mr. Johnson, with interest.

"Why, yes. The room was crowded."

"What was the form of your invitation?" asked Miss Wells, greatly interested.

"Oh, about the same as any 'At Home' on a society card."

"Had you met most of the parents before?"

"Oh, no. But I think a teacher ought not always to wait for the parents to take the initial step toward an acquaintance that must be a mutual benefit. To be sure it is pleasanter for us when they do so, but so many things hinder busy people from starting; yet they would be more than glad to meet us half way. The surest way to any parent's heart is through their children; and they will always be inclined to assist those who take an interest in the juveniles."

"But how did you manage the trustees?" again asked our superintendent.

"Easily. I simply changed the form of the card, and hinted that the prosperity of our school was due largely to their financiering, and that it depended somewhat upon their interest in its everyday matters."

Let me tell you how else she manages to secure the coöperation of parents. *She calls on every one of her pupils* every year, sometimes oftener. None are so poor or so wretched as to merit her neglect — none so far away that she will not go to them. And no child is ever absent from school two days in succession without an extra call from her. If she finds them sick, she ministers to them; badly clothed she institutes work by which they can help themselves to better;

indifferent about attendance, this call is sure to rouse them; and the gratitude of the parents is visible in their love for her, and in their interest in her success. She gains them all, without an effort. No, not without an effort; not without a sacrifice of personal comfort, leisure, society, strength. But her success is compensatory for all these. Her pupils, their parents, the trustees, are her firm allies now, and will remain her life-long friends. O, I could tell you of so many of her ways for securing this coöperation that results in such mutual benefit — little in themselves, mayhap, but aggregating grandly. Space and time forbid further particulars at present, however.

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XIV.

ENVIRONMENT.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., June 1, 188–.

MR. —— ——, State Supt. of Public Instruction.

My Dear Sir: — I believe I have never told you how Miss Preston got the school yard cleared up and beautified last Spring. As it required so little effort on her part and yet resulted in so much good (not only to our school but to individuals outside whom I feel sure she reached unintentionally), I will give you a brief outline. If any one has better or more numerous opportunities than another to exercise a missionary spirit, that one is the public school teacher. He has access to at least as many homes as there are representatives in the school; and in each of these homes the teacher may be a power for the good, the true, the beautiful. I have only recently learned to think of these things, and now my attention to it is entirely due to Miss Preston's influence and to your talks and letters. If she has not entirely revolutionized our dull old city, she has at least worked wonders in it in some directions. But I will not stop to moralize, as a plain statement of the facts and her manner of dealing with them will suggest the simple "How" to other teachers.

The yard is large and well shaded, but has never been kept clean until within the last two years — the leaves of

Autumn serving as decoration for Spring. The ashes and cinders from the basement beautified one side of the yard, while a pile of kindling ornamented the other. These received some valuable auxiliaries in the shape of waste papers, thrown from every window, remains of lunches (bread crusts, apple cores, orange peel, etc.), with now and then a stray rubber by way of variety.

Of course the papers gradually disappeared after the advent of the waste paper basket, mentioned in a former letter; but this did not diminish the ash heap nor render the other things invisible. After a time Miss Preston persuaded those who brought their dinners to save the pieces usually thrown away, in a newspaper she provided; and she sent them by one of the big boys to a poor family living in the same square, for their hens. The children were delighted to have the scraps of food utilized; and it was a godsend to the poor fowls, who were not overfed, at least.

But as the snows of winter gave place to grass, the yard began to be talked about. Miss Preston agitated the subject in the most judicious way, never fretting, scolding nor finding fault. This she never does. She simply said one day while standing in the yard:

"Henry, if you will bring a rake to school this afternoon, we will see if five or six of us cannot improve the looks of the yard a little bit."

Henry did not need a second invitation, such he considered it, and volunteers to help were both numerous and eager. The yard was cleared of all the rubbish except the kindling wood and ashes. The janitor was asked to have them removed — the former to the basement, and the latter to fill in the hollows in the back yard.

One morning Miss Preston appeared bearing in one hand a white vase or urn, such as adorn the yards of some of our "best citizens," only smaller. When one of the girls asked her about it she laughed and said: "I guess we must go to the woods for a standard for it;" and after school our department went *en masse*, and when a stump of the desired size and shape had been found, the boys dragged it down to the yard for her and, following her directions, placed it in the center of the left yard, and the vase was fastened to its top by means of nails driven around it. It was then filled with dirt; and bits of yellow myrtle, coliseum ivy, and othonno, were stuck into the soil and left to grow and cover both vase and stump. After being pronounced "a beauty," "lovely," etc., it transpired that the vase was the top of an old stove which some one was throwing away, when she begged it for the purpose named. She took it to the wagon shop, where she got it painted for ten cents.

The next week she said, just before dismissing school one day: "If some of the boys will help me a while to-night, we will start a rockery in the right-hand yard, opposite the vase." You may be sure that there was no lack of help; and while the big boys did the lifting, the little ones helped pile the stones in the desired shape. By degrees working only a few minutes at a time, this was finished and filled with soil, and creeping Jenny was brought, to grow over the sides. A cross was erected in the center, and scarlet runners, morning glories, sweet peas and a hop vine were trained over and around it. It was beautiful.

Afterwards a geranium bank was built against the south end of the school house, and kept a perfect mass of bloom there during the whole season. This year two large flower

beds have been started for pansies, verbenas, phlox, etc., with what result you shall surely know in time.

Then she went to the Board of Education and asked if they had any fund which they could legally appropriate to the purchase of two croquet sets! Having great confidence in her "management" they gave, without a murmur, what no one else would have dared to ask for; and the croquet was put up, one set on each side of the back yard, for the pupils' use.

I need not say that all these things have paid large dividends, for the money invested and for the extra labor. Riots in our school are unknown, truancy unheard of; and every pupil is the loyal subject of a loving sovereign.

I must tell you that Mr. Johnson has been suddenly taken sick, and by common consent of the Board of Education he has asked Miss Preston to officiate as superintendent during his illness. Will she be a success? Yes, if she consents to take it all — for she *never* goes beyond her depth.

More anon, from

Yours Very Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XV.

HEALTH.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Nov. 30, 188–.

MR. —— ——, State Supt., etc.

My Dear Sir: — So much has been begun, accomplished, and become a thing of the past, since my last letter, that I hardly know where to begin. But I think I will go away back to our September meeting, for the topic announced for discussion was so unusual, and at the same time of so general interest, that I cannot forbear thinking that a synopsis of it may be welcomed by your intelligent teachers.

Two years ago we should have been, — well, to put it mildly — astonished to hear Mr. Johnson suggest anything out of the old, stereotyped way for our consideration; but since the advent among us of a teacher who *lives* and, living, *thinks*, we have found to our surprise that the educational "world does move;" for when we came together for the first time after the long vacation, we found Mr. Johnson partly recovered from his illness, but not well enough to perform all his duties as superintendent, and with Miss Preston for his chosen deputy! Miss Preston, whom he had well nigh beheaded for heresy only two years ago! Miss Preston, who for some months was a veritable "thorn in the flesh" to our conservative superintendent, because of her radical

notions and her persistent, although unobtrusive, declaration of them!

Well, we were not as entirely unprepared for the blessed *denouement* as we might have been, for we had all noticed how, unconsciously to himself, perhaps, he had been gradually won over to her views of school matters; so after our reorganization we were not so much surprised to hear his proposal as the subject for our next regular meeting, "Our health: why and how shall we promote it?"

We were requested to consider it seriously, analytically, and thoroughly, and then to come to the meeting prepared to give our views and their reasons; our experiences of the past and plans for the future.

So totally unlike the old, formal meetings of our Association, where we did nothing but read statistics and receive commendation for their fullness or censure for their incompleteness! Verily, time should be measured by our work instead of by the ticking of the clock; for in this short space we have learned more of our profession, done more for it and better work in it, than in all the long years that preceded it.

I have only one regret at the changes wrought; I am no longer "Miss Preston's Assistant," she being removed to a wider circle of action — and I was glad to be known as such. Is it too late for me to make a place for myself among thinking teachers? Will it be an advantage to me to be left more dependent upon myself, now that I have been really "waked up" to my position and its responsibilities? Can I ever hope to accomplish anything for the cause, myself? These and similar questions are formulated daily, hourly, constantly, as I teach, work, or write. But, concerning health as discussed by our Association:

Mr. Johnson occupied the chair; the meeting took the form adopted by common consent a year and a half previously: an experience, conference, or class meeting. Mr. Lowell spoke first:

"As to the 'why' we should try to make the most of our physical nature. We are all more or less governed in all that we do by selfish motives; and I think that *for our own comfort and convenience*, if for nothing else, we should avoid things that we know to be harmful, and cultivate the habits that we find by observation and experience are most beneficial in their results."

"Very good," said Mr. Johnson; "it is true that we are promoting our own interests in seeking to improve our bodily health. Who has another suggestion?"

Miss Miller arose somewhat timidly, to advance her ideas on the subject. Another indication that "the waters have been troubled," for she has heretofore been a "silent partner" in our concern, except when personally called upon to express herself, and then she has done it so diffidently that we have felt sure she would rather listen than speak.

"I think it may be done from a sense of duty to ourselves, quite as much as from a seeking after personal comfort and convenience. Our full measure of self-duty is not rounded until we have done all that we know is for our good."

The idea of making our health a matter of conscience! It was new to some of us any way, but I think it's not so bad a suggestion after all. Is it not Carlyle who declares the law of culture to be (in effect), Let each become all that he was created capable of being; expand, if possible, to his full growth, resisting all impediments, casting off all foreign, especially all noxious, adhesions, and show himself in his

own shape and stature, be these what they may? All that we are "created capable of being," means so much. But I digress.

Mr. Wheeler spoke next:

"I am inclined to be governed by Mr. Lowell's stated conviction that selfish motives may be the inspiration that governs me in seeking to improve my physical nature. I enjoy life when I'm well; but if suffering from neuralgia, malaria, dyspepsia, or fever, my pleasure in existence is gone."

Verily, he seemed like health personified as he stood there. Tall, straight, well proportioned, and ruddy of countenance, he might indeed "enjoy life," and one could hardly imagine him conquered by disease.

"That is good, too," observed Mr. Johnson, "as far as it goes; has any one else a 'why' for us to consider?"

Next Miss Wood spoke:

"*As a matter of economy* it would be well for some of us to study the first principles of health. Besides having been off duty several months, and thereby curtailing my salary, I have recently paid a doctor's bill of $45; and *financial considerations* alone would be sufficient to lead me to give more attention to the matter than I have ever done before."

My own turn seemed to be right here, and I ventured the observation that since my daily bread was secured by the performance of duties that could not be done in sickness, financial considerations were of some importance to me also.

Miss Smith came next:

"Well, my Yankee spirit rebels at the idea of being dependent upon one else, as all sick people must be in a greater or less degree, in proportion to their helplessness.

I don't like even to feel that I am marring some one else's pleasure, by asking for quiet because my head aches. I don't want to be obliged to wait for some one to do my errands or to wait upon me because I am unable to do either for myself. Health is liberty; disease is slavery;" and she sat down as abruptly as she had spoken, leaving a visible effect on the minds of some of her auditors.

I began to think Miss Preston did not mean to speak on this subject, but she now said, slowly and without rising:

"These are all *good* reasons, and show the importance of making an effort to promote our health; but I am not sure we have found the *prime* 'Why' embodied in any one or all of them. 'No man liveth to himself;' and although a proper degree of thought and care for self is not only commendable but necessary, I think we must go even further than that, and consider somewhat our relations to others, and their happiness, comfort, and convenience. Nor can we ignore the fact that we, as teachers, have a special responsibility in the matter; for we cannot do our duty by those over whom we have voluntarily assumed a guardianship, if by reason of physical disability our chief thought is given to ourselves; and we have no moral right to come into school day after day, with our tempers so tried by physical suffering which we might prevent, that we cannot do full justice to the physical, mental, and moral necessities of our pupils. We have no right, as teachers, to make our pupils feel our pain, nor to render them the least injustice by neglecting to 'round up the full measure of our duty' to them."

Of course hers was the broader, more noble view of the question, as usual; but we all acquiesced in it mentally, if not verbally. Mr. Johnson had betrayed more than ordi-

nary interest in this part of the discussion, and now added his mite to the general contribution:

"There is one phase of the subject untouched as yet, I believe. *Time* is an important element in our work, and all that is lost by sickness is so much taken from our allotted three-score-and-ten. We have no right to waste our time nor to shorten our years by endangering or injuring our health."

There were other speakers, and some minor lights were thrown upon the subject, but the question soon turned on the "How?" Space and time alike forbid the rehearsal of the points made on this division of the subject, until you hear again from

Yours Very Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

(For as such I still prefer to be known, having made your acquaintance while in that capacity.)

No. XVI.

HEALTH. (*Continued.*)

OLDTOWN, N. Y., March, 188-.

MR. —— ——, State Supt., etc.

My Dear Sir:—"How shall we promote our health?" seemed to us even more practical, as we advanced in its discussion, than did the first part of the question, the "Why."

"I think," said our Superintendent, with some hesitancy, "that as *breath* is the essential of life, perhaps we had better open this part of the subject by the ideas we have gained from experience, concerning *breathing*. To appreciate the necessity for knowledge on this subject, one only needs to have the respiration become short and painful for a few days. A long, full breath, one which is painless, will be looked upon as a real luxury then," and he smiled faintly.

Stern, cold and hard as he had always seemed to us, I think not one but felt a secret sympathy for him, knowing that his words must have been the result of his recent experience.

Mr. Wheeler added: "Yes, and it is such a cheap luxury, too. The trouble is, that *nine tenths of us don't know how to breathe.*"

Really, I had never thought of it before, but I began to be interested. "Is this a part of the New Education?" I

asked myself. "Are we to breathe by rule, as we learn arithmetic?"

I had no time to formulate the thoughts that crowded in through the little door that had been set slightly ajar in my brain, for Miss Wood immediately spoke:

"Not know *how?* What do you mean, Mr. Wheeler?"

"Precisely what I said," with a smile; "we breathe, for instance, through our mouths instead of through our noses more than half of the time, thereby filling our lungs with dust, as well as with air that is too cold before it passes through the place where our Creator intended that it should. Again; we do not breathe *deeply* enough. We are satisfied to take a short respiration which only half fills the lungs, that should be filled full at every upward movement of the chest."

Breathing! so simple a thing — and yet in this nineteenth century even that is reduced to an exact science! What next?

"And then our eating is, so much of it, wrong. We eat too much; too often; and things that are not calculated to repair the wastes that are continually going on in our systems. We do not sufficiently study our body-functions. Our digesting apparatus is more of a mystery to most of us than Kepler's Three Laws, or the doctrine of evolution."

This, of course, came from Miss Smith. She has a breezy way that is refreshing in some temperatures, although rather chilling in others. I like her though; I can't help it — if she is somewhat incisive in her remarks.

"What *is* 'too often?'" was Miss Miller's rather apologetic inquiry. "We can hardly take more than three meals a day if we are teaching, and I've never supposed that extravagant."

"True; and if we *only* ate at meal times there would be fewer cases of headache, indigestion and dyspepsia. As a rule, we give our digestive organs plenty to do with what we eat at table; but how few of us refuse fruit, nuts or candy between times!"

Silence for a few moments; perhaps we were undergoing a sort of self-examination, for directly Mr. Lowell "confessed" for all of us:

"I think we must all plead guilty to that home thrust," and he looked around to see if there was any dissent. Finding none he proceeded: "But if we go very much into details here we shall never get off this one department of the subject, and there are *so many!* We must make a real study of this thing, and as 'A word to the wise is sufficient,' we will, perhaps, do well to discuss this matter still further in the future, after having had time to look it up a little more. One thing occurs to me just now, and I give you the thought for what it is worth. We may take every precaution as to eating and breathing properly, and yet neglect the next essential, *rest.* Too few of us know how to rest, or when or how much. Some of us do not even know what real rest is."

"Do you mean anything further than sleep?" asked Mr. Johnson.

"Oh, yes. Sometimes a mere change of occupation is rest. We cannot do the same thing for a great length of time without some weariness to the organs and muscles that are brought into use by that special form of labor, be it physical or mental; and at the same time others are inactive, and will become equally weary for want of use."

"Then you do not consider *idleness* necessary to rest?"

"Sometimes, perhaps, but seldom. But we should be careful not to pursue the same thing too long at a time, even in the matter of recreation and rest. Too much of the same sort, even of rest, is not good for us."

Now that was news to me. I had never really thought of it before; but I think it must be true, because I know that I have always found myself about as tired of "doing nothing" during my summer vacation as I have ever been by teaching; although, to be sure, I have only recently learned how much real hard work *can* be carried on in the school room.

"One other thing occurs to me," said Miss Preston. "Perhaps all of us rely more upon tonics and narcotics to carry us over an uneven spot in our journey than we ought. Quinine, chloral, aconite, etc., are made to do the duty of common sense, prudence and self-denial."

"I have heard," said Mr. Brown, somewhat sarcastically, "that 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure;' and perhaps the little 'prevention' we take so easily keeps away the necessity for greater doses."

"Yes, perhaps. But then if we began the 'prevention' a little earlier in the day it would be better still by removing the necessity for even a tiny dose, from the effects of which our systems must always take time to recover."

"I think our dress is not always conducive to health," said Miss Wheeler. "Perhaps I should say ladies' dress, for I rather think our fathers and brothers have some little advantage there. They have more freedom of movement, more room, more comfort, and consequently more good nature, which is a great help toward good health."

Did you ever hear anything more absurd? Good health

secured by good nature, and that (partially at least) by roomy clothing!

I find I must stop, but if you like I will crystallize the different ideas into as many sentences, and you may have them for what they are worth. Then, if you want the gist of our next meeting on the same topic, I'll give it some time in the future, but I want first to tell you how Miss Preston teaches grammar, which I shall do in my next:

1. Breathe *deeply*, through the nose, with closed mouth.
2. Eat *regularly*, judiciously.
3. *Rest* frequently; not too long in the same way.
4. Avoid medicine (ordinarily), but do not be sparing of common sense.
5. Dress *comfortably*.
6. DON'T WORRY.

These suggestions are few and simple, but we have tested them pretty severely in the last few months, and are pleased at our success.

Yours Respectfully,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XVII.

GRAMMAR.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., May 1, 188–.

STATE SUPT. PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

My Very Dear Sir:— Our talk on "Grammar and How to Teach It" was so interesting and helpful to most of us that I wondered if it might not be useful to others who had run across a similar "snag." Yes, I used that word advisedly, for it has been a very serious question with some of us — with *me*. And I am free to confess that the trouble began in my room — if that can be truly called "trouble" which finally results in so much good to so many people. It was on this wise:

A year or more ago, Colonel Clinton visited our school with a view to sending his youngest daughter there. Now the Colonel is *very peculiar*. He has views; and as he has money also, he can afford to be independent in his expression of them. He does not believe in public schools and has never patronized them, having hired private tutors and governesses for his children. So we were all very much astonished to hear him say, after having sat a while:

"Miss Preston, I have heard so much of your work in school, that I thought I would drop in and see if the reports had not been greatly exaggerated. I am pleased to find that they have not, but 'the half has not been told me;'

and now I want, if you can receive her, to send my daughter Katharine. Her governess has been called home unexpectedly by the death of her mother, and cannot come back to us. But I see you are pretty well filled up here. Can you take her?"

"Yes, I think so," said Miss Preston; "we'll manage some way. Has she never been to school?"

"No. None of my children have ever been to public school. My oldest son fitted for college under my own supervision, and my second is doing the same; will be ready, we think, in the fall. My oldest daughter will graduate from Wellesley in June; my second daughter entered last year — and now here is Katharine, just about with your grade in her studies, I should think."

"What is your objection to the public schools?" asked Miss Preston, very quietly. You could not have guessed from her demeanor that he had touched upon her favorite theme, but he had.

"Oh, the system is all wrong," he began, but stopped suddenly, as if recollecting himself.

"Perhaps. I will not deny that it has faults, very grave ones, it may be; but I have never found that the mere mention of an evil rectified it; and unless we have something better to offer in its place, we gain nothing by criticising it."

"True; very true," he replied earnestly, "and I think you are doing your full duty to help it. You do not do as so many have done who cry 'down' with the system, and that is just why I want Katharine to be here. As a general thing the schools are governed by cast iron rules, and graded by a sort of Procrustean process of examination that lops off or stretches the pupils, until they all fit one educational

bed, without regard to their intellects, home surroundings, or after lives."

Much more of the same sort — worth printing, too, for each is chock full of ideas on this subject — but I want to tell you about the grammar discussion, and must not stop on the way; but the result of it was that Katharine came, and Katharine saw, and Katharine conquered, as hereafter.

Things went all right as long as Miss Preston stayed, but she was called upon to take Mr. Johnson's place during his sickness, and her class fell to me. (Would that her mantle had fallen to me also!) I got along very well until one day, in the grammar class, Katharine asked me something, and I, in my old unthinking way, referred her to her text book.

"Oh, I know it's there, and I can read it if I choose; but what good will it do, as long as I don't understand it?"

Now that set me to thinking, and I thought real hard. Two or three years ago I should have blamed her, perhaps punished her, for impertinence; but I have found out some things in that time; and when little things like that occur I try to see if there may not be some underlying reason for it. Well, to help matters along, the next day brought me the following note from the Colonel:

"If Miss Preston's Assistant will excuse my little girl from the recitation in grammar, I will undertake the care of that study myself, and will see that she is so well drilled that she will 'pass' at the next examination. Please let me hear from you on the subject, and believe me,

Your Most Obedient Servant,

M. S. CLINTON."

Before my association with Miss Preston, the above would have called forth thoughts, perhaps remarks, like these:

"Perhaps he had better make out my programs for me! I

am surprised that he doesn't petition the Board of Education to let him dictate the entire course of study for our schools! I wonder what he sends his child to public school for, if he means to reserve the right to elect what she shall or shall not study. Does he suppose I can have all the parents using their discretion, or their want of it, in the education of my pupils? If he wants to teach her grammar, he may teach her that and everything else along with it."

But now, things are so different; I can see why a teacher should not monopolize all the interest in a child's studies, and how it is that some parents feel deprived of parental privileges by the educational straight jackets to which their children are subjected. So after some meditation on the subject, I penned the following reply:

"MR. M. S. CLINTON,

My Dear Sir:— Much as I should be pleased to comply with so reasonable a request, I cannot yet see my way clear to do so. The course of study for each grade has been planned by the Superintendent, with the concurrence of the Board; and until the rules are abrogated or modified, the teachers have no discretion in the matter, and cannot choose but obey.

Most Respectfully,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT."

There I was, well entrenched behind my breastwork, the Board and Superintendent; which breastwork he proceeded to destroy at once by appealing in person to the said B. and S.

"Why will you," said he, "insist upon wasting so much precious time on mere technicalities that are neither useful nor comprehensible to the average child? By doing so, you use up half a dozen of the best years of the child's life, and give him a smattering of several things and a dislike, if not a positive aversion, to those really desirable, and deprive

him of the opportunity to learn *things that he must meet* in after life, prepared or unprepared. *You've no moral right* to do it."

The idea of there being a moral side to grammar! Well, I took my trouble to Miss Preston, and asked her if we could not discuss it at our next meeting.

"Certainly; we will do so. Questions like this are coming up every day, and we must think of them. Colonel Clinton is more than half right — partly wrong — as such radical people are apt to be."

And that was the beginning of our revolution. Some of the teachers opened their eyes with astonishment when the subject of the day was announced, and not a few suggested that it was a foeman hardly worthy of their steel; but these same objectors were among the first to fall in the conflict.

Miss Bates began:

"I like the method I learned by. I am used to it and I have never learned any other. I am perfectly at home in it and should lose myself in trying to teach a new one that I was not familiar with;" and she settled back into her seat.

Miss Ingersoll whispered to me: "I wonder if the system she is so 'familiar with' advocates the use of prepositions at the end of sentences?"

Now as Miss Bates must have learned grammar thirty or forty years since, I thought, myself, that perhaps some little advance had been made in the method of teaching it. But Mr. Brown interrupted my reflections with:

"Well, I suppose grammar and the best methods of teaching it have made some progress since I studied it, for 'The world does move' in educational as well as in other senses, and I am looking for *results* that will help me choose from among the many methods in vogue."

"As for me," said Mr. Lowell, "I do not know which I most dread, grammar or compositions. I got a great deal of light on the latter subject at one of our first meetings on the new plan, and it helped me wonderfully. If grammar can be reduced to the same simple thing, I shall be grateful to whoever will show me how to render pleasant the disagreeable, and useful the apparently useless. As it is, my pupils not only dislike it, but they see positive reasons why they ought not to be compelled to study it."

"Exactly my experience," said Miss Wood. "To their 'I don't see the use of it,' I generally put in, 'You will, perhaps, when you are older;' but when I said that to Mary Towner the other day, she said that her father often said that reading the best authors gave any one a better knowledge of the queen's English than the mere study of grammar could ever do; and I had nothing to reply, for I felt its truth."

Mr. Johnson sighed. "How much remains for us to do!" he said despondently.

"Perhaps we shall gain time by *undoing*," said Miss Preston. "This is one of the things I have wanted to have discussed in council for a long time. It has troubled me that the course of study mapped out for us to follow ignores grammar until after the child has been several years in school, and then the indiscriminate stuffing of rules, definitions and conjugations begins. 'Fall term, *Kerl's Grammar* to page 95; winter term, *ditto* to page 125; spring term, to page 150, and review the year's work.' The next year it is the same, only more so; and the process is continued *ad libitum*, *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseam*, until I don't wonder that teachers, pupils, and parents cry for mercy."

"Is there no 'balm in Gilead'?" queried Miss Smith.

"Certainly there is a cure," answered Miss Preston. "I believe there's no physical disease without its remedy, and that there's no question of educational importance without its answer; but both remedy and answer require diligence, labor, and patience, in the finding."

I believe I am getting beyond my limits, and so will defer the suggestions offered and conclusions at which we arrived, until my next; remaining,

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XVIII.

GRAMMAR. (*Continued.*)

"I teach grammar largely by using it — as, if I were to teach walking I would set the class to walking. Much of our teaching, perhaps including grammar, is theoretical, and in ordinary conversation and school work we do not make use of the principles we have taught," said Miss Preston.

"Will you illustrate your meaning?" inquired Mr. Johnson.

"Just this will do it: in our grammar classes we teach the declension of the personal pronouns, giving the first person singular the formal 'me' in the objective — and yet many of us almost invariably say: 'It is for you and I' — merely because we do not think. It isn't because we do not know; but having learned grammar theoretically we neglect its practice."

"How do you avoid this trouble, Miss Preston? I have heard that your schools were almost models of careful speech," said Miss Wood.

"Thank you. I fully believe in the Scriptural injunction to 'Watch' in this line, at least. Nowhere do we so often betray ourselves as by our speech, and as teachers we should be exemplars in this as in other things."

"That is so — but I want the prescription for the 'Balm in Gilead' or the balm itself," said Miss Wood.

"To be brief, then," responded Miss Preston, "I bid every

one watch, and begin the work myself. I inspect all the written work with that in view, and look out for oral lapses, asking each pupil to do the same. Each one keeps a note book in which he records any error of speech which he hears; and on a certain day in the week we have a general exercise in grammar. All participate; books are laid aside, and from three to half a dozen pupils are selected to write at the blackboard; those at their seats take turns in reading from their note books whatever they have accumulated, and these sentences are put upon the board by those who have been selected to write. When that is all done as many readers are chosen as there have been copyists, and as each phrase or sentence is read I call upon some one to point out the error, some one else (at times I call for a 'concert' answer) to correct it and tell why it was wrong, giving the rule that covers the case."

"Now that strikes me favorably, very," said Mr. Johnson reflectively, "although I've never heard of grammar being taught in that way. But you say 'Giving the rule that covers the case.' That implies a previous learning of technical rules, does it not?"

"Yes. As often as my school can digest a short lesson in grammar I give them one, always teaching objectively where possible — and afterwards reducing the matter to writing. Then I give several days to the elucidation and elaboration of the principle just taught. We get illustrations daily, and from everywhere; and we so make practical what we learn — and only the practical in grammar seems worth while, when there is so much to learn that is absolutely necessary to our best development."

"But, Miss Preston, do you never use a book in your classes?" queried Miss Wells.

"Oh, yes, sometimes, but not for an every-day diet as it were," and she laughed. "Where standard authors differ in methods, principle, or definition, I present the different views and the reasons given; and at times I quote authorities to substantiate my own statement. My pupils keep note books in which they enter the main part of each lesson; and each one owns a text book, to be used for reference or for a set lesson whenever necessary."

"I should think it would take an ordinary life time to get ready to teach grammar in this way," said Miss Smith.

"Some longer, perhaps, than in the ordinary way," said Miss Preston, "but *it pays*, in that it saves the child from the almost universal dread of studying grammar, and from the uselessness of much of it, besides saving time for other things, from what is usually given to that study."

"We will begin the September Term in the study of grammar under Miss Preston's direction," said Mr. Johnson hopefully, "and I believe that it will result in good in more directions than those mentioned. Meanwhile, we will ponder on these things and study ways and means;" and we disbanded with a feeling of gladness that this "bugbear" of the common school has at last been chained.

Before closing I will illustrate Miss Preston's method by giving two or three examples taken from the blackboard in my own room, as they were written and corrected in our to-day's exercise.

"This is the *sunniest* side of the street."

TEACHER: "John, what is wrong about this?"

JOHN: "Why, the word 'sunniest' is not right."

TEACHER: "Correct it, please, and tell *why* it is wrong."

JOHN: "*Sunnier* should have been used, as that is the comparative

form for the word *sunny;* and the superlative form 'sunniest' must not be used unless there are more than two things to be compared."

TEACHER: "Yes, and a street has only two sides. Mary Fields, you may read and correct the next sentence."

MARY: "The sentence reads: 'The candy is for you and I.' I think it should be for you and me,' but can't tell why."

TEACHER: "I will call for volunteer information." (Dozens of hands are raised to signify their owner's knowledge on the point, one of whom is chosen to speak.)

CHARLES: "Why, the case is wrong. The nominative form has been used, when it should be objective after the preposition *for*."

TEACHER: "Can you give the rule?"

CHARLES: "Yes, ma'am. We had that rule last week. 'A noun or pronoun is in the objective case when it is used as the object of a verb or preposition.'"

TEACHER: "Very good. Now do you understand it, Mary?"

MARY: "Not quite. I do not see how he knew whether 'I' was nominative or objective."

TEACHER: "Mary, can you decline a personal pronoun which is in the first person, singular number?"

MARY: "No, ma'am, I am sure I can not. I do not believe I ever knew."

TEACHER: "Charles, give it please. Mary has come among us so recently that she has not learned that yet."

CHARLES: "Nominative *I*, possessive *my* or *mine*, objective *me*."

TEACHER: "Now do you see, Mary?"

MARY: "Yes, ma'am. I felt quite sure it ought to be objective — but I could not tell how he knew which was objective."

TEACHER: "Very good. Now we will take the next one. Lily, you may read it."

LILY: "He don't do so."

TEACHER: "Can you correct it?"

LILY: "I think so. Should it not be: 'He does n't do so'?"

TEACHER: "Yes; but tell us why, please."

LILY: "Don't is an allowable contraction for do not, and we should say *does not*, if we said it in full."

TEACHER: "Give us the rule for that if you can, please."
LILY: "Verbs must agree with their subjects in person and number."

These are samples, merely, of the method, which you must see in use to get an idea of its scope and thoroughness. Hoping that you may, I remain

Yours, Cordially,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XIX.

WHISPERING.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., May 22, 188–.

MR. —— ——, State Supt., etc.

My Dear Sir:—We were somewhat startled, at our last meeting, to hear Mr. Wheeler plead somewhat vehemently for a symposium on "Whispering—the Evil and its Cure."

"I am sure," he said, "that if I don't get and keep it out of my school, untold and almost unqualified bad discipline will result. It is the one thing against which I feel compelled to wage a constant warfare; and yet, like Banquo's ghost, it will not 'down' but rises and confronts me daily, constantly."

"I have felt the same desperation regarding the same evil," said Miss Wood; "and I've resorted to every device that has been brought to my notice to break up the pernicious habit, but without any *staying* results."

"It used to trouble me, at first," said Miss Smith, "but of late my interest has been so centered in the general work of the school that I've almost forgotten about the old enemy."

I saw Miss Preston smile a little quizzically, and I knew that she had a theory of her own on the subject, which I thought would be brought to light sooner or later, so waited in patience.

"I've never been much annoyed by it myself," said Mr.

Stephens. "I supposed it was a 'part of the play' to whisper. In fact I don't see how one can well get along without it, if he's either social or enthusiastic."

"I am with you in sentiment, in part, at least," said Miss Preston, "and I have but little faith in most of the 'devices' that put children upon so unnatural a strain as to require them to desist entirely from using the God-given boon of speech, under pains and penalties."

Here *was* a mess! For we had been taught to look upon whispering as one of the cardinal sins of the schoolroom, and the whisperer as a criminal whom nothing could rescue from an ignominious fate.

"Why," said Miss Smith, "do you ever allow it in your schools?"

"Under certain restrictions, yes," said Miss Preston, cheerfully.

"Will you kindly name some of the restrictions?" asked Mr. Johnson.

"With pleasure," she responded heartily. "In the first place I ask only what I judge to be reasonable, and am quite sure to get this. I say, early in my acquaintance with my school and its needs, 'Children, it isn't *fair* for some of you to have or take privileges that all may not share, is it?' And the average boy is quite easily touched in regard to fair play. Then I try to show how, by whispering, one may disturb two or three and have a bad influence upon many more. I also provide times when all may whisper *at once*."

"Why?"

"Well, there 's often a reason for the whisper. A child may have been absent when the lesson was announced, and not know where to study; or tardy when something of im-

portance occurred, and, childlike, he'll want to know about it. Through misfortune, carelessness, or accident, he may be without the books or materials needed for his lessons, which can not be learned until these are procured; and I prefer to have the necessary whispering all done at one time."

"How often do you give them this opportunity?" asked Mr. Wheeler, interested.

"Once during each session."

"But does not this consume a great deal of time?" queried Mr. Johnson.

"Oh, no. One of the very first things I try to teach is prompt obedience; and as the children know what the bell signifies, and obey it very promptly, five minutes is ample for each whispering recess."

"I should think it would almost save that and more, in the long run," said Miss Miller.

"It does," replied Miss Preston. "I take the same time to answer general questions that must be asked some time, and that arise, for reasons similar to those that almost necessitate whispering."

"Then you do not permit questions to be asked during recitation and study hours?" suggested Mr. Brown.

"Certainly not. Besides teaching the very bad habit of interrupting — which is likely to be detrimental to their manners in social life—(and I *must* soon give you a synopsis of our talk on "Manners," it was so full of good things) it does break up the line of study among the listeners. *Consecutive thinking* is the only kind of thinking that is really valuable; and I am aiming to teach this, which can't well be done in a room that is always giving out sound."

"True," said Mr. Johnson; "and while you've demon-

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strated a show of necessity for some whispering, you have shown that it may be managed so as not to be the unmitigated evil that we have generally considered it"

"I have usually found that nearly all evil is more or less 'mitigated' by the germ of good which it may contain," assented Miss Preston; "and by teaching children to respect the rights of others at the same time that they guard their own, we have made a long stride toward doing away with whispering. 'A time and a place for everything' is another principle which, thoroughly taught, will develop the thought that whispering may become a nuisance if done at the wrong time"

"Your reasons for a limited allowance are so good, and your plans for its management so simple, that I think I shall try them" said Mr Wheeler, hopefully. "Like some other things, although a bad master it may be made a good servant."

"I have heard good teachers go so far as to say that nine tenths of all the mischief done or projected in school arose from this cause," responded Miss Preston; "but I think the statement overdrawn, the imaginary evil magnified. Still, I should want that, like any thing having a downward tendency, to be within my control. Even well drilled soldiers or sailors may get so far beyond their superior's influence as to mutiny, if not handled with judgment — and I want my school children to respect themselves and love Right enough to work toward the best interests of all, in this as well as other matters; so I place it in their hands, partly, and show them how much more and better work they can accomplish when whispering is regulated a little."

"Do you permit other forms of communication except at stated intervals?" asked Mr. Johnson.

Miss Preston laughed. "Now I begin to think you believe I engrave my rules and regulations in cast iron; but I don't. I say simply this: 'Whisper if you *must*, but be careful. Think, before you do it; and let the matter wait if you can. If it is something imperative, and it will disturb less to write a note, do that. Avoid either when possible.' "

"It seems to me," ventured Mr. Whipple, "that that is like opening a sluice way for a freshet."

"Call it that, or a safety-valve, or what you will, there is no danger if you don't let it get the start of you," said Miss Preston. "You are engineer, fireman, or what not, and you must manage the brakes. I only wanted to show the difference between rigid, uncompromising prohibition, and reasonable management of what may be either a help or a nuisance."

Her ideas on this subject were new to most of us, and her plans equally so; but we were all "with one consent" satisfied that they were at least worth trying. Hoping that some others who have "swamped" on this question may be helped by our discussion of it, I remain,

Yours Very Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XX.

MANNERS.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., June 26, 188–.

MR. —— ——, Supt. Public Instruction.

Respected Sir:—Our little knot of interested teachers took up "Manners" during one of our spring meetings; and we really gained something for ourselves as well as for our schools, by its ventilation. The parliament was opened by Miss Sigourney, who in an undertone, designed only for Mr. Brown's ears, said:

"I was amused this morning on my way here, to meet Julian Bristol. He doffed his soft felt hat to me, with a bow that would have done credit to a Chesterfield or a Raleigh."

Now Julian is one of my big boys, of foreign descent, graceful, good natured, and one of Miss Preston's ardent admirers — as all her school children are; and at her suggestion I have been giving my department little lessons, hints, and talks, on social culture; and I have been carefully noting its effect in the manners of my pupils, in school and on the street; and Miss Sigourney's tone, more than her words, nettled me a little, and although not addressed personally, I spurred up with:

"Is it unusual for gentlemen to raise their hats to you, Miss Sigourney?"

Now it was ill-bred, and I ought to have possessed my soul in patience. Miss Sigourney, however, good-naturedly ignored my implied sarcasm, and laughed a little, saying, gently for her:

"Julian is only sixteen; and our incipient gentlemen, of such tender years, are not usually masters of such captivating manners as to make it seem like an every-day occurrence to me."

"I am sure there should be nothing unusual in such a display of courtesy as to make it a target for remarks of any sort," said Mr. Johnson, a little warmly. "I have n't noticed that our boys and girls are below the average in politeness."

"And yet," said Mr. Hopkins, "it was only yesterday that my landlady complained of the 'rabble' as she termed the boys (boys who call themselves young gentlemen, too, and many of them come from families of good social position) who came 'tumbling' pell-mell out of the High School building, just as she was passing. Some really ran against her, and nearly all were so intent upon running that they were as oblivious of her presence on the pavement as they were of her right to it. She was quite disgusted, and spoke with some vehemence of a 'system' that makes scholars at the expense of gentlemen."

"Now I think she's hasty in condemning the system, faulty though it may be," said Miss Preston, on the defensive at once. "To be sure the conduct was rude, inexcusable, may be; but Mrs. Storrs never had any children of her own, and her childhood is so far in the background that she has perhaps forgotten her own impulsive youth — if it *was* impulsive; and if was n't she could n't well understand such a phase of boy-nature."

"That's the key note to much of our trouble of every description," sighed Mr. Johnson. "We *don't* understand ourselves nor others, and we look at a thing from only one side. Now suppose we lay aside our plans for to-day's work, and talk about 'Civility: How it may be taught and inculcated in our schoolrooms.'"

Personally I was very glad of this suggestion, for when I began to look with my new eyes upon the work before me I could see so much uncultivated "good timber" before me that the magnitude of the work nearly overwhelmed me. "Watch," Miss Preston had said to me. "You will see that nine out of ten do not know how to get out of a room properly when there are others in it; how to terminate a call or visit gracefully and pleasantly; how to acknowledge a favor, nor how to make amends for a blunder." And I had watched, and had found these things and more — things that I wonder I had passed without observing for so many years. It is just the difference between machine work and soul work everywhere.

"Well," said Miss Sigourney, "I did not know I was leading up to such a profound discussion; but on the whole I can not regret it if it opens my eyes as to any good way to treat a matter that has only troubled me a short time."

Mr. Whipple was in the chair that day, and he said: "Perhaps we shall get at the merits of the subject more quickly if we concede the great need of work in this field, and confine our first inquiries as to the best ways of doing the work. Miss Ingersoll, where would you begin?"

"On the 'woman' side of the question, naturally," she replied with a laugh. "I would teach deference to the sex, from the youngest boy up."

"Good," said Mr. Whipple. "But that would only touch a part of creation."

"A very large part, though," said Miss Ingersoll; "and the boy who is polite to his mother and sisters will hardly be rude to the rest of the family."

"True," said Mr. Whipple, "and yet I think we should begin on a broader basis. Let us hear from the gentlemen of the Association. Mr. Lowell, where would you place the fundamental principles of good breeding?"

"I think," said Professor Lowell, slowly, "that if we place selfishness at the base of rudeness, we shall find that courtesy rests upon its opposite trait."

"That is good, too, as far as it goes," said Mr. Johnson, "but some people who are really unselfish at heart are not models of manners."

"That would suggest 'tact' as an essential element of courtesy," said Mr. Wheeler, a little doubtfully.

"Yes; and it is a good plank," said Mr. Whipple; "yet I hardly think we have gotten at the heart of the matter yet. Let us hear from the fair sex," and he looked appealingly at Miss Preston.

"I would give every child the Golden Rule as an infallible general guide," she responded, unhesitatingly; "the thought 'Would I like to have such and such things said and done to me, or in my presence,' will often prompt to an act of civility, or restrain the performance of an impolite one. But all children and most young people as well as some older ones need specific, definite instruction as to how and what to do under certain every day circumstances."

"You are surely right," volunteered Miss Smith. "Only last night Luella Hubbard offended my sense of propriety

by returning a borrowed book without so much as a 'Thank you,' when I knew that she had really derived a great deal of pleasure from it, for I had heard her speaking of it in a very animated way, to a group of girls and boys, about ten minutes before, when I first came into the room."

"Precisely so," said Miss Preston; "and while we hardly want to use the *argumentum ad hominem*, we can make such a circumstance as that the text for a general lesson to the school, and with good effect."

"Yes," observed Mr. Whipple, "it is without difficulty that I recall my own spasmodic efforts to do the agreeable to a little blonde of sixteen, while I was yet in the transition period and frock coats," and he laughed at the recollection.

That laugh did us all good, and it gave us a sort of fraternal feeling that was eminently good for the topic under consideration.

"And if those efforts had been well directed, instead of 'spasmodic,' I dare say you would have been successful," laughed Miss Sigourney, a little mischievously. "Now I think Julian Bristol has made a good start in the world."

"And so he has," said Mr. Whipple, with energy. "When he goes out to hunt up a place to work, if he knows what to do with his hands, when to take off his hat, how to speak when necessary and when not to, and dozens of other things that have a commercial value, he has a much better chance to get the place he wants than if he has the uncultivated manners of the average boy."

"I had n't thought of these things before. It is strange," said Mr. Johnson, seriously; "but I believe that we ought not to neglect this part of any child's education."

"Nor ought we," said Miss Preston. "Manners and

morals are really as essential as geography and grammar. But we can not teach, in these things, farther than we go by example. We can not consistently exact politeness if we do not use it. If we teach our girls and boys to salute us with 'Good Morning' when they come in, and 'Good afternoon' when they go out, it must be as much by example as by precept."

These are but a few of the suggestions thrown out; but I have always noted in Miss Preston's association with her pupils that she observes even the least of these "small, sweet courtesies," prefacing every request, however insignificant, with "Please," receiving every favor with "Thank you," "I'm obliged to you," or something equally courteous —never saying "Thanks," as is a prevalent custom, denominating it as "decidedly curt" and "next to nothing." And they are influenced by her manners; we can all see that, and many have spoken of it to

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXI.

DRESS.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Sept. 13, 188–.

MR. —— ——, State Supt.

My Dear Sir: — The subject of "Dress" seemed to follow so naturally that of "Manners," that we entered upon its consideration informally and without a previous announcement.

Miss Sigourney presided; and when I tell you that she is as remarkable for her lack of concern in her personal appearance as she is for her good nature — which is almost traditional — you will say:

"The two too often accompany each other."

To-day she had on a dress which was considerably soiled, a none-too-clean collar, and her hair was in a state! This, too, when she was to preside at a teachers' meeting!! I was sorry for her as soon as I saw the "tone" the meeting was likely to assume, for I felt sure she would have her sensitive nature wounded; but, would you believe it? she remained — or seemed — perfectly oblivious of her toilet and its imperfections. Miss Whitney sat near, and a more perfect contrast can not be imagined. Older, by some years, than Miss Sigourney, every last little speck of dust brushed from her garments, with spotless linen, a dress that fitted as though she were "run" into it, hair so smooth and glossy

that you could almost see yourself in it, you would have felt almost instinctively that she would almost parse her sentences before giving them utterance, and that she would never move in unseemly haste. She is a fairly good teacher, cold, but moderately successful notwithstanding. But I must stop descriptions if I recapitulate with any degree of fullness.

Mr. Brown began by some light remark about the æsthetic tendencies of the education of the day.

"Now I think that is to be encouraged," observed Mr. Johnson. "I have only been thinking of it at all of late; but I believe, with Miss Preston, that the impressions of early childhood are more potent for good or evil than we are generally aware; and that their influence is almost incalculable. By our own appearance, even, we may foster a taste that will become vitiated; or we may sow seeds that will develop into a really artistic sense."

"I believe you," echoed Miss Sigourney, oblivious that she was condemning herself by assenting to the popular idea.

"Why, Mr. Johnson, do you really suppose that the dress we wear, or the condition of our hair, teeth, or nails, have any bearing, direct or indirect, upon our pupils?" and Miss Wells looked incredulous as she asked it.

"Allow me to answer, please, Mr. Johnson," interrupted Professor Lowell, his face aglow. "Among my earliest recollections are those of an old man whose memory I revere, but of whose personal appearance I can not, even now, think without a feeling of disgust. Good, he undoubtedly was; that he was actually repulsive in his toilet is no less true; hair unkempt, teeth that were equally guilty of a brush and of any dental skill, nails that were in a constant condition

of crape, boots which never seemed to come into any close relations with brush or polish, and other garments on which the dust of ages would seem to have settled as if they'd found a sure abiding place."

We did laugh at the pen picture, a little, but Professor Lowell went on:

"He had many fine instincts, many delicate, refined ideas, incongruous as they seem. But I did not discover this so early in my acquaintance as I should if the evidence had not been so strongly against him."

"Precisely so," said Mr. Johnson; "and this just corroborates what I said at first. But I would like to hear some of the lady teachers speak on this subject."

"I remember one thing, in the early days of my teaching," said Miss Preston, "that made quite an impression on me. One of my little girls came up to me, one afternoon, and said as she laid her hand caressingly upon my arm, 'Miss Preston, if we'll be real good this week will you wear that lovely pink dress Friday afternoon that you had on at home the other day?' Without giving the matter a second thought I said 'Why yes; of course I will,' and dismissed the subject from my mind. Friday morning came, and with it came a reminder from Lily: 'Don't forget your promise, Miss Preston.' And I didn't, but wore the dress that had been designed specially for home wear, simply to please the child who asked me to."

"Did it have any visible effect?" interrupted Miss Wells, interested.

"I was just coming to that, as it's the best part of the experience," Miss Preston answered. "As I came up the walk I heard a group of small children discussing their

teachers, and being behind them, I soon heard my name; and they were using it as a sort of symbol for beauty, purity, truth, goodness and all the cardinal virtues combined. I lagged behind, and pondered. All the afternoon I observed that things moved most easily. A word was more than sufficient, a look amply so; and it was due to the influence of the pink dress."

"Are you sure it was that?" queried Mr. Bishop.

"I am. Circumstances developed this afterwards, in a way that would have dissolved any lingering doubts if they had existed in my mind."

"I can readily believe that," said Mr. Johnson. "I have recently made observations which convince me that the more tastefully a person dresses, the more attractive one is, the greater his influence everywhere, and correspondingly greater his commercial value."

"What would you suggest for good, every day material, Miss Preston?" queried Miss Miller.

"Of all things I would say avoid goods with soft, wooly surfaces. They catch dust, chalk, and fuzz, in the schoolroom; and thistles, burrs, and 'corners' outside. Serges, alpacas, and similar goods for winter; cambrics, percales, etc., for summer."

"And what colors?" asked Miss Wood.

"Greys, browns, olives, dark greens, blues, maroons; anything, in fact, but black. A dull or neutral tint, for the main dress is always 'good form;' and this may be garnished by a bright ribbon, a bunch of flowers, or set trimming. Then I would have one or more bright dresses for special occasions, as we have condiments with our staple food."

"Mr. Johnson can you suggest a toilet for the male persuasion?" queried Mr. Wheeler.

"Oh, I think they can all draw inferences from this talk, without going into details. But," and he spoke earnestly, "we must all remember that the little foxes spoil the vines."

We separated soon after this, but each went home thinking of the silent influence of the seemingly unimportant factor in our make-up, Dress. Why the very idea that good taste in dressing has a moral aspect and a commercial value was new to many of us; and yet it is reasonable. That it is potent in giving first impressions concerning us is none the less true, and it is the first impressions that tell. Where is the end of its power?

I remain,

Very Cordially Yours,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXII.

PENMANSHIP.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., October 29, 188–.

MR. —— ——, Supt., etc.

Dear Sir: — The question of Penmanship, in its various phases, has been agitating us for some weeks. Allan Eddy's mother broached the subject at one of the sewing societies with which our little city is blessed; and behold! every mother present was full of pent up feeling on the subject.

"Al can hardly write his name legibly," said the little woman, snapping her teeth together as she bit off her thread. Had her eyes not twinkled a little bit you might have thought her more out of patience than she really was.

"Neither can Will," chimed in Mrs. Cramer; "and it seems to me as though a boy of twelve years ought to be able to do himself and his teacher credit by his writing."

"My stars! Wayne writes as if ink were the cheapest commodity in the world and he had an unlimited supply of it, and was under bond to use it all within a given time and on a given space," laughed Mrs. Gallup.

"*I* don't think it is any laughing matter," said Mrs. Hoard. "Harry actually writes more indistinctly now than he did when he entered the Junior Grade."

And so they chatted, witn no word of excuse or palliation, nothing but fault finding and criticism of the system

that develops such poor writers from what, in some instances at least, gave promise of being such good material.

At last, Mrs. Ripley spoke: "Frank is doing very nicely. I believe that I have never seen any better penmanship than his gives promise of being. There is nothing showy about it; but it is neat, legible, and rapid."

"Rapid. Yes, I can easily believe that it is rapid," said Mrs. Breese. "Agatha complains to me nearly every day that she 'misses' in half of her lessons because they are dictated and she cannot 'keep up.'"

"Fred does not seem to have any trouble on that score," said Mrs. Tyler, quietly. "I heard him telling Ella Wilcoxen the other day that at their recent examination in spelling and penmanship Miss Preston gave them a hundred words, timed them, and from the moment of her pronouncing the first word until the last paper was signed, folded and labeled, it was just thirty-seven minutes."

"Oh, well, he and Frank Ripley are both in the other ward and are under Miss Preston's tuition," said Mrs. Eddy; "and she seems to get at the 'how' to do everything in her line, with the very best results. I only wish my three boys could be in her school."

And so the question came to be agitated, until finally its magnitude made it seem a "thing of evil" and it came up for conference and debate at our next session. Without parley or preliminary, and as though no one else's method or opinion were worth discussing at all, "Miss Preston," said Mr. Johnson, with a dash of his old, imperative tone, "come; tell us how you manage to get so good results, in so short a time, and with so little trouble."

"Why, it is *so* easy," and she smiled; "it is simply to

begin right, and to begin early enough, before the muscles become hardened or bad habits are formed. Patience, then, and care, coupled with constant vigilance, make good penmen of even very young girls and boys."

"That is good for all except definiteness," said Mr. Brown; "but will you not add to its value, by telling us just how and when you begin, and how you proceed?"

"With great pleasure. The day a child is old enough to be presented for admission into my school room he is none too young to use the implements of war; and he begins his career by holding his pencil properly while he plays with his slate, if he is not more than five or six years old. He is awkward at first, unless he has had home or kindergarten training; but he can be taught. When he can 'make marks' with his pencil in position I let him now and then hold a pen and 'write' if he is ambitious to do as he sees the older pupils doing. A little drill each day, of the chubby hands; a guiding toward a definite object; sometimes a slate pencil against the hard surface of the slate, sometimes a crayon at the blackboard, then a lead pencil, with now and then a pen and ink, and he becomes and keeps interested in the variety of tools that he has been handling."

"But, Miss Preston, do you mean to say that you let mere babies use a pen and ink in your school? We have never given it to them until the second year of the Senior Grade;" and Mr. Johnson looked a little aghast at the possibility of a fatal experiment.

"No, not 'mere babies,'" she responded cheerfully. "The youngest 'nursery stock' has never been turned over to my tender mercies; but as soon as the children are brought

within my jurisdiction they are given pen and ink, under my (or some one else's) guardian care, at not-too-frequent intervals, and they learn to use them without stabbing themselves with the one or deluging themselves or their neighbors with the other."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes; and by the time they are seven or eight years old they write quite legibly; and I have had those who did credit to themselves, even as young as that."

"Miss Preston, I wish you would begin at the initial step and tell us just how you accomplish the desired result," said Mr. Johnson, with interest.

"It varies with the patient and the circumstances," she replied, smiling. "For instance: what I would do with a class in the primary room, knowing that that year or two would be all that I would see of them, and that the subject would be ignored for the next two or three years by my successors (as it nearly always is until the children are in the Junior Grade) would be entirely different from what I would do with a more mature class, or with a class which I expected to stay with for two, three, or more, years."

"I can readily see that — but as we have all these conditions represented here, suppose you give us a brief outline of your work under each of these varying circumstances," and he looked appealingly at the one teacher on whom he seems to rely for advice and real help. Oh, it is worth something to know that one's work can be relied upon — that it will stand the tests of time and result; and this must be an inspiration to Miss Preston, as I hope it may come to be to

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXIII

PENMANSHIP. (*Continued.*)

"Well, I will begin with a supposed class of children in the Primary Grade, who have already learned to hold their pencils, but who know little of form. One thing right here — to all classes I would hold up as good a copy as I could make while they watch."

"Why then, in preference to doing it in their absence?" queried Miss Butler.

"Because it helps them see how — where to begin any given stroke, how carried, and in what way it is finished. My teaching of the subject will doubtless seem childlike to most of you — but I can not teach children in any other way. I begin somewhat after this fashion — having drawn some lines of various sizes and shapes, and at various angles, on the board:

Children, what have I done?

Been making marks — some one will be likely to venture.

Yes; and we call them *lines*. Are they all alike?

No, ma'am. Some of 'em tip (slant) and some of 'em stand up straight, and some bend around.

Yes, and each kind has a name; those that stand up are called *straight* lines, and those that bend are called *curves* or *curved* lines; and I make more, asking them to name them as I do so. Then from these two kinds I develop the

first letter of simple form, the letter *i* of the small alphabet, at the same time explaining the *right curve* and the *left curve* of penmanship. Having assured myself that they can name its parts whenever seen and wherever found, I let them write while I 'call off.' That is usually enough for one lesson for so young a class, and at the next lesson I review this and take up a new one, *n*, and combine the two in a word. I always find great delight at the idea of writing words, so I begin early, and give a new one as often as possible, so that they will not tire of the work. I group the letters, according to their formation, and do not attempt a new principle or combination without special preparation of the lesson myself, made with particular reference to the class that is to receive it. I teach from analysis, compare one letter with another, different parts of the same letter with each other — and teach the children to use their eyes, and brains, as well as their fingers, in writing."

"How do you divide the small letters? Into how many and what classes?" inquired Mr. Wheeler.

"Into four classes: the *short* letters, the *stem* letters, the *loop* and the *inverted loop* letters," she replied.

"Do you use copy books at all?" inquired Mr. Johnson.

"Never. The copy should be made by the living teacher, for the reasons before given; and it should be produced upon the child's mind so accurately that if a wrong proportion is used, or an imperfect line — a right curve for a left, or a sharp turn for a round one, they will be able to remedy it."

"Nor tracing books?"

"Never. Nothing but ordinary foolscap paper, cut in halves for convenience, across. I put a general copy on the

blackboard, analyze it, get the children to work, and then go among them and examine their work — finding the most common troubles, and calling attention to what I have seen without mentioning any names, try again. Then if I find any one perpetuating the same mistakes I make a personal comment on the work, in an undertone — so as not to injure the child's desire to do well — point out the defects or have him do so if possible — sometimes placing an imperfect word or letter on the board on purpose to get an expression from the children as to its accuracy or defect."

"How about the more advanced classes?"

"With those who already write, even though quite poorly, my first work is to get before them a mental picture of what is right; teach them by analysis, and let each one aim toward his mental model, guiding and suggesting where necessary."

"Do you write a great deal, in your ordinary lessons? Reading, history, spelling, or language, for instance.

"O, yes; a great deal. But I *never* allow scribbling. Learn to write *well* first, rapidly afterwards. I say to the children that all can learn to write beautifully; that the only difference is the difference in the amount and quality of practice they put upon it."

"Is it so, indeed?" said Mr. Johnson. "I had supposed that some could not learn to write well, as some can not learn to read well."

"I have never seen any one who could not learn to do both," replied Miss Preston. "But in the matter of writing I think perhaps I do give it more attention than some, for I have found its advantages to be so great; and I encourage the pupils to take great pains in the formation of each letter, even when writing from dictation. 'Keep your thoughts ahead of your pen'— is a help to most of them."

"You are at least logical and successful in your methods, Miss Preston," said Mr. Johnson, "and I am gratified at the results of your work, and grateful for your illustration of your methods."

This was the voice of us all — and while much more was said privately to little groups and knots of interested teachers who gathered about her when "meeting broke up," enough has been said to give you an outline of her ways of teaching penmanship.

Hoping it may be helpful, I remain,

Yours, in the general cause,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXIV.

OVERWORK IN SCHOOL.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Dec. 23, 188–.

MR. —— ——, Supt. Public Instruction.

My Dear Sir:—Coming together a little early at our last meeting, a few of us found Mr. Johnson and Miss Preston eagerly discussing something of evident importance, for each was oblivious of all else.

Rising soon after our entrance, Mr. Johnson said:

"Well, Miss Preston, we will have the matter brought before the 'common council' to-day. I am only sorry you have not mentioned it before."

"It has troubled me somewhat ever since I have been here," she said, with a shadow of hesitation in her voice; "but as a teacher I was not in the best position to remedy it—besides being a little uncertain that it might not be largely a matter of fancy at first; but as your assistant I have had more and better opportunities to study cause and effect, and I am convinced that both teachers and pupils undergo too much strain during a large part of the year."

The meeting was now called to order by our Superintendent, who presided that day, and after the usual "opening ceremonies," he said, with some feeling:

"I have had a matter laid before me to-day which gives me great surprise and real anxiety. I have never thought

much about it, but believe that it may be true that the number of hours spent in school and school work, daily, is too great for both teachers and students, and that the curriculum should be abbreviated, or the period for its passage be prolonged. I would like to hear from each of you on the subject, and freely."

We were a little astonished, to put it mildly, and for a few minutes no one spoke. Then Miss Smith broke the silence, by saying in her peculiar way:

"I'm glad somebody has begun the agitation of the waters, for the subject has been a sore one to me for some time. Last year Mollie Arnold had to be kept out of school a third of the year, because of her headaches; Nettie Hurlburt's eyes became so bad that she had to wear glasses; and Clinton Brundage had to leave school altogether. This year it is no better; head troubles, eyes, or something, one right after the other, until I have sometimes been led to wonder if a common school education is worth all it costs, any way."

"I am sure it isn't in some cases," said Miss Preston, "for when a boy or girl comes out of school with impaired health, narrow chest, 'stoop' shoulders, defective eyesight, or bad digestion, as the result of overwork, all the 'sheepskins' in the universe will not compensate for the loss."

"True," said Mr. Johnson, "and if the same daily grind has overtaxed the teachers who should be living examples of physical culture as well as mental training, the results are indeed deplorable, and can not be too heartily condemned."

"What do you propose doing?" queried Mr. Brown. Now he is not one on whom the duties of a teacher will ever rest with undue weight. He is very considerate of himself, and is likely to outlive his day and generation, at

least. He may not be actually lazy, but he has the quality of inertia remarkably well developed.

"We are just thinking of that part of the evil," Mr Johnson responded, seriously and thoughtfully. "If we could close school a little earlier each day, and all spend that time out of doors whenever possible, and in some active work any way, it might help."

"We should have to drop some of the studies then," said Miss Wheeler, "for there's only time enough now to give each branch a cursory sort of teaching, and that sort of teaching doesn't last."

"No," said Miss Preston, "and it is bad all around. The innocent victims of this overworked system get a smattering of things beyond their comprehension, learn almost nothing thoroughly, and get into slovenly habits of thought and study that incapacitates them for the real work of life. We attempt too much, and we stuff, cram, and overwork children and teachers, until they come to look, act, and feel jaded nine tenths of the time; and this condition is not compatible with the best mental effort."

"I hardly know what we should leave off," said Professor Lowell, with hesitation.

"Miss Preston has shown us how we may gain some time in the teaching of geography," said Mr. Johnson, "and I dare say she can suggest other places where we waste time that might be used to advantage," and he looked at her inquiringly.

"I think, perhaps, we shall get at the root of the matter most easily by ascertaining what is the object, grasp, or scope of our curriculum," she suggested. "It embraces mathematics enough to turn out automatic book-keepers

and clerks. It takes in several languages, double that number of exact sciences, several 'arts' and the 'three R's'—besides other things 'too numerous to mention,' as the circus bills say. These are all good, and each may find all that he needs for a practical life; but our mistake is in an indiscriminate pouring the contents of each of these 'vials of wrath' down the throat of each, instead of adapting the dose to the sufferer."

"What do you mean?" asked Miss Howe.

"Why, here's Thomas, with a mother to support, two younger sisters and one brother, all waiting until he can do the work of an accountant in Mr. Slocum's bank, where he has the promise of a permanent place if he becomes a good penman, quick at figures, and an idea of commercial correspondence. Having undertaken to educate him, and map out his course for him, we should do so with some reference to his future needs; but no, he must go through the regulation drill on vocal music, Latin, and astronomy, the same as though he had plenty of time to do it all, and with no special reason for extra work in his line.

Again; Mary has no liking, no taste, and no reason for studying cube root, surveyor's measure, or apothecaries' weight, for her young soul is all on fire with the genius of Art. She loves drawing, and has 'form' largely developed in her phrenological make-up, but we keep her pegging away at bank discount, equation of payments, algebra and other things equally foreign to her aim. *She has a right* to choose from the curriculum, or to have chosen for her, what will point toward her object. Helen, who means to teach, and has a fondness for language and literature, ought not to be compelled to tie herself down to physics or metaphysics, if she must make her living by what she learns at school."

"There is truth in what you say," observed Mr. Wheeler, "and I have often wondered, if we were called upon to define the object of our work, what we would say."

"Several of the best years of life are given up by the student," pursued Miss Preston, "and he becomes fagged physically, and we surely ought to look for splendid mental attainments, in part compensation for what has been lost otherwise; but in the majority of cases we shall look in vain, and at the end of the 'course,' instead of presenting to the world one who is symmetrically developed physically, mentally, and morally, armed and equipped for the battle before him, we too often give a semi-invalid with a mass of indefinite knowledge floating around somewhere at loose ends in his brain, unavailable because of its vagueness, and often worthless."

"What *can* we do?" This came somewhat despondently from Miss Miller.

"Weed the curriculum. Shorten the school hours. Teach *individuals* instead of classes, wherever possible. Give some time to physical culture, social, and moral training. Find out, if possible, somewhere near the child's probable future, and lead him up to it."

"*That* would necessitate more overwork among the teachers than the present way, would it not?" inquired Mr. Brown.

"I think not. By reason of the shortened hours of labor the teachers would be capable of accomplishing more in a given length of time and yet would have leisure to recuperate from their state of exhaustion. As it is now, by reason of reports, examination papers, class books, records, etc., the teacher 'drudges' as much as the overworked pupil. I

know," she went on, smiling, "that much of what is complained of as overwork in school is really overwork out of school. A boy or a girl is up late at night several times during the week, and after a time headaches begin and 'overwork' is the cry, when it should be 'late hours.' But there is a show of reason, at least, in the complaints that are taking shape and being presented almost daily."

"Before we come together again we will see if our idea can not be made useful in revising our plans," said Mr. Johnson — and we parted with some new ideas rolling over and over in our heads.

More anon, from

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXV.

SPELLING.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Jan. 22, 188–.

MY DEAR SUPERINTENDENT:

Our last familiar talk was on the time worn and time honored topic of "Spelling," and it was really interesting.

"I have been having an old fashioned spelling school," said Miss Butler, with a laugh, as she seated herself.

"How did you manage it?" queried Miss Preston, with interest.

"Quite in the old fashioned way. I selected two 'captains' who 'chose sides' and spelled against each other."

"You pronounced the words?" inquiringly.

"O, yes. And no one could try but once, on any word. If he misses it goes across to the other side, the 'fallen soldier' sitting down as soon as he misses, his 'opposite' catching it if possible — if not, he too goes down."

"It gets to be quite exciting, does it not?" asked Miss Preston.

"Yes, indeed it does."

"Have you ever spelled against your whole school?" she inquired again.

"No. I never thought of that. Have you?"

"Yes, many times. I let some one who can pronounce distinctly, and who does not need the practice in spelling as

much as the others, pronounce the words and I spell every alternate word."

"But, Miss Preston, I thought you did not believe in oral spelling," said Mr. Whipple.

"Nor do I, as a rule. As we usually use spelling only when writing, I have the lessons written in the every day practice. But I have found it a good thing to review quite frequently, and this I often make a sort of play-spell (no pun) as Miss Butler seems to have been doing. It prevents the sometimes dread of review day, and spurs to thorough work; for in a 'play' of this sort every one's weakness in orthography is made manifest, while in the ordinary lesson routine only the child who misses and myself are cognizant of his faults."

"How is that?" queried Miss Sigourney.

"The slates are passed to me for examination," responded Miss Preston.

"Will you tell us how you conduct a spelling lesson?" asked Mr. Wheeler.

"With pleasure. Having everything in readiness, I pronounce 'One' (to correspond with the figure already on the slates) and then give a word to go with it. Should any one fail to understand the word, a hand is raised to indicate this, when I again pronounce it, and go to No. two. When the last word is written, each writer signs his name below his work, dates it, and the slates are gathered up in order from each aisle, by a 'waiter' chosen for the week, and placed on my desk for my inspection. I then announce the next lesson and my pupils study that while I look over the lesson just finished, underscoring the misspelled words on each slate, after which the slates are again distributed, the 'misses'

corrected by those who have made them, and that lesson is considered done."

"Do you mark a word 'missed' if the penmanship is illegible?" inquired Professor Lowell.

"Always. And not only that, but I do so if it is merely ambiguous, a *u* for an *n*, an undotted *i* or an uncrossed *t* being an error that in a legal paper might be of importance; and I aim to teach accuracy in even the most trifling details, as I believe it to be one of the most important qualifications for any position in life."

"Good," assented Mr. Johnson; "but, Miss Preston, I have heard that you teach spelling much as you do language — with and by means of every other lesson. Is this true?"

"To a certain extent, yes. If I assign a lesson in arithmetic, I want to teach observation at the same time I teach mathematics; and the habit is a good one to cultivate. I do this so regularly that it comes to be looked upon as part of the play, and no lesson is considered fully learned if there's any orthographical difficulty unmastered."

"Do you use a text book, or 'speller,' at all?" asked Miss Smith.

"Yes. I have found Swinton's 'Word Book,' or something similar, helpful for a set lesson; and then we sometimes make our own lesson, I suggesting a topic, and the children pronouncing the words connected with this topic which they do not know how to spell. These words I write on the blackboard and leave until the time for the next recitation, then use the copy which I have had made — instead of the book — and proceed as before."

"Do you ever spell around, marking the words that are missed, and afterwards announcing them?" asked Miss Wheeler.

"I never have. How do you manage?"

"Simply pronounce so many words to each pupil. He spells each one, only trying once, you keeping the record but not announcing the result until the close of the lesson."

"I should think it would make a pleasant variety."

"It does, and it has this recommendation; no one has any advantage over the other. For instance: in Miss Butler's 'spelling school,' if a word comes up where it must be spelled in one of two ways, and the first speller misses it, the 'opposite' knows how it must go and gains by what the other lost."

"I see," said Miss Preston. "There are many ways to relieve the study of monotony and save it from being merely a memory lesson. And that reminds me. As soon as a child can understand the simplest rules I have them learned, and then give them examples under each rule, so that the children can apply what they learn."

"Spelling has always seemed like such an arbitrary thing that I've never made the most of it, I think," sighed Miss Wood.

"It may be invested with a great deal of interest," said Mr. Johnson, "and I think that by the time we have taught a few more years with an inspiration to do our best and make the most of our opportunities and material, we shall better know how to do even so simple a thing as to teach spelling to the best advantage and with a view to the final results."

So say we all, and God speed the day when more of our number awake to a realization of what they, and others through them, are missing.

With best wishes, I remain,

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXVI.

READING.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., February 25, 188-.

MR. —— —— Supt., etc.

Since our talk on Reading I have been putting into practice some of the ideas I got that day. I have lately been troubled that our public school is training such poor readers, and while lamenting the fact and wondering at its probable cause I have been too busy to solve the problem.

Said Mr. Johnson at the opening:

"I hope there will be a freedom in this discussion, for reading is one of the really essential things that seem to be in more or less danger of neglect."

Which is somewhat true; for with the advent of so many new ideas as to what should be taught, our time has been so filled that we have read less in our classes than we did twenty years ago, when every pupil read aloud four times a day.

Miss Wheeler ventured the first remark:

"If no one has formulated the especial features of complaint, perhaps we had better inquire first as to what appears to be the matter."

"I can tell of one trouble, at least," said Professor Lowell. "The young ladies and gentlemen who come into my classes do not average to read as well as children should at twelve

vears of age ; and I know that many of them leave the High School without the ability to read, at sight, an ordinary newspaper or magazine article. Several days since I was invited down to Mrs. Hanchett's to dinner, and Lizzie picked up the evening paper and read a few items in a shockingly bad way, and with apparently no concern at her awkwardness with the Queen's English. Her mother and her college brother were painfully apparent of her shortcomings, but she seemed to think that she acquitted herself creditably."

"That is one bad thing about it," said Miss Ingersoll. "The fault is so prevalent that no one feels isolated because of poor reading. Lizzie reads as well as Harry, Emma, James, and Ellen, in the same class ; and as she seldom hears any one else read how should she know that her work is below par?"

"That remark suggests a hint of one step toward better work," said Miss Preston "We can each furnish a good model in this, as in other things, and as children are quick to imitate and to see and discriminate, they will be benefited every time they hear really good reading."

"True," said Mr. Johnson. "Cannot each of you name some special fault which you have observed in class or individual, and then suggest a remedy for it?"

"I have noticed," said Miss Wheeler, "that many of my youngest pupils drawl their words. They even stumble over very simple words, such as I felt sure at first they *must* be familiar with. By experimenting, however, I found that this was not so; that the real difficulty lay just here: that as soon as a child was familiar with the shape of a word he would not drawl nor hesitate in its pronunciation ; so I began bringing

them into frequent contact with words. I found that they had tired of their readers, and while they were familiar with the 'pieces' and could 'read' any or each paragraph as a whole — having heard the thing daily, perhaps — the words were as strangers to them; so I put them to work in a new way: reading backwards. By so doing they could not tell when they had pronounced one word, what would come next, until they learned the next word."

"Has the result been satisfactory?" asked Mr. Johnson.

"Very. They are getting a somewhat extended vocabulary of words which *they know;* and when they know a word they can call it by name when they see it, and that without trouble."

"I have used that plan myself," said Miss Preston, "and with even older boys and girls. Sight-reading is not common enough even among our older pupils. But the trouble which I have observed in visiting the different schools is of an entirely different nature. I have noticed very rapid reading; even passages of great tenderness, pathos or sublimity being in about 6-8 time. I have asked one or two such classes that have come under my observation to read in concert. This gives a chance for the very slow ones to accelerate their speed, while those who read too rapidly are held in check by the 'volume of voice.'"

"I have found no trouble with my classes," said Mr. Wheeler, "when reading from their reading books; but if I asked any of them to read tomorrow's history, geometry or botany lesson, I was always sure to find them in the quicksand. So I have been using newspapers, magazines, etc., for extra supplies; and have asked each to bring something of interest to read to all."

"That word *interest* covers a multitude of help," laughed Miss Preston. "You will never have trouble in securing listeners, nor in teaching reading, if you can hold their interest. The newspaper work is a good idea."

"I was in a school recently," said Mr. Johnson, "where the teacher was reading a story to her school, and every time she came to a word with which anyone was not familiar, a hand was raised to indicate the same, and they had a good time word-hunting."

"I have done that myself," said Miss Wood. "Sometimes, to vary the exercise, I have had one of the pupils read for me when we were having a recreation of this sort."

"I have found one trouble," said I; "the children drop out little words and do not seem to realize it. They do not seem much concerned to get at the sense of what they read. So I have 'played school' sometimes, reading a paragraph as they do, asking them to watch for errors and call attention to them."

"I have had them do that with each other, to a somewhat limited extent," said Miss Smith, "and for the same purpose; I also sometimes let them read until they make a mistake, the first who notices the mistake taking the next turn. That serves to keep them alert, and it holds their interest at least while it lasts."

"A good plan," said Mr. Johnson; "and I think I know of one good reason at least for poor reading among the older pupils — *want of practice.* This comes sometimes because none of the household is interested in developing good readers sufficiently to listen to Thomas's rendition of the President's message, or to Mary's scrabbling through a report of the latest concert. Young America is taught to

be seen and not heard, so Young America reads in silence when he should be reading aloud."

"Too true," said Miss Preston; "and what is true of pupils is true in only a lesser degree of us. We read aloud too little, and we do not often enough listen to good reading. We grow careless, and our own habits are reflected in our pupils; and if we begin a reform we must begin at home and work outward."

"Activity of mind, a thought of the author's meaning, a putting of the child *en rapport*, if possible, with the article to be read, by a few timely questions, a few judicious remarks, will go far toward helping expression," said Mr. Johnson. "We must teach them that we cannot express what we do not truly feel; and we can not feel what we do not understand."

"That is one thing about many of the reading books of to-day," said Miss Preston; "most of them are down to the level of the child's capacity. A few years ago this was different; and the child who 'went through' a set of the old readers not only tired of trying to grasp what was away beyond his comprehension, but was made ridiculous by so doing. Now science is made attractive, poems of merit are found expressed in a language that even children can comprehend, and history tells marvelous stories of thrilling interest, and yet in words that the juvenile mind can grasp."

"My classes are interested just now in English history," said Mr. Brown; "so we have had as many authors on our table as possible, and when a fact of interest has been ascertained we have read from the different books, impromptu; and I can see, although it is less than a month since we began, that it has been a source of improvement."

"It must have been," said Mr. Johnson. "I should like to

hear more from some of the Primary teachers, for I have an idea that some of the bad habits start on the lowest round of the ladder and might be held in check there. But I see that it is time to close, and we shall have to wait for another session."

We were not ready to stop. We seldom are since we began to brim over with our subjects, but I must follow his good example.

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXVII.

HOBBIES.

Oldtown, N. Y., March 15, 188–.

Hon. —— ——, State Supt. Public Instruction.

My Dear Sir: We had a very lively discussion at our last meeting, concerning our various "Hobbies," and as I may not write again for some months, I will outline it in brief.

"I think," said Mr. Johnson, seriously and penitently, "that I have been unfortunate in my own hobby; for I have placed System so at the head of all things that great damage has been done to many of you who have tried to work after my ideal. I am glad that the change came when it did, and only regret that it did not come sooner. In presenting System as your goal, toward which I asked you to work, things that were of more importance were neglected if not ignored; and time was wasted in trying to bring all to one standard."

Miss Wood said "Dignity seems to be the hobby which I've ridden with a high hand and a tight rein until recently; and yet somehow my dignity has n't preserved me from attacks of various kinds, both among my pupils and from their parents. I, somehow, set out with the idea that in order to keep a school well under subjection one must be very dignified in bearing, very impressive in manner. My

success as a disciplinarian has been far from satisfactory to myself, and I know that I have not pleased my patrons."

"Possibly your key note is wrong," suggested Miss Preston. "Perhaps if, instead of keeping your school well under subjection, you had aimed to keep the pupils *en rapport* with you, you would have had less trouble. I think that my hobby "Getting down to the Child," has led me into errors of a mental nature, at least. I may have made things too easy for the child, in my anxiety not to shoot too far beyond his powers. I think there is real danger in this, and that the mistaken kindness of the teacher or mother who does too much for a child will rebound, leaving the child more nearly helpless than he would have been with a more vigorous method or treatment."

Miss Sigourney was the next to confess, and remarked: "I believe that 'Discipline' has been my hobby, and that I've been a hard rider. I can see, in my later work, that the discipine that needs very much muscular force is not good discipline, and most of mine has been accomplished by means of the rod. The word and the idea have been ever present, preventing many things that would have conduced to the general good; and yet because some things might interfere with discipline, or might interrupt the discipline or break it up, I have said 'No,' when 'Yes' would have been better, and when I might thereby have shortened the distance between my pupils and myself."

"Just my idea," resumed Miss Wood. "I have come to believe, at least in my own case, that the dignity that needs bolstering is not real dignity, but a snam; and it may be so in regard to discipline."

"It is," said Mr. Johnson. "The discipline that needs

to be talked about in order that it shall not remain in obscurity is not a power."

"I am not sure," said Miss Wells, "but that I have been carried away by 'Appearances.' I have wanted my school to compare well with others; and I've made it a sort of end toward which I've worked with a good deal of zeal, if not with wisdom. Too much has been sacrificed for mere show —but I've quit my hobby, 'forever and for aye.'

"Good!" said Miss Preston. "Would that more of us had the courage of our convictions!"

"Oh, we're getting it," said Mr. Lowell; "but it takes a while to eradicate the habits and thoughts of years, and break ground in entirely new soil. I believe that Laziness has been my great drawback. I have been too prone to do what would be the least trouble now, regardless of the future and of consequences. Laziness is an easy hobby, but is likely to throw one at the last." and he laughed a little uneasily.

"Your experience is not unusual," said Mr. Johnson. "Few of us realize until too late that our every day work has such a relation to the future that we ought to put in our best building material at any cost."

I knew that my turn was at hand, so said, "I have been riding 'Order' for my hobby, and so gallant has been my steed that for many years I, like others, mistook the sham for the real. It is not so very many years since I actually believed that order, good order, consisted in having my pupils work in automatic precision, speak in set forms, varying not a hair's breadth in recitation, even if done without spirit or understanding either. I know better now, and I look back with horror upon the machine work of my earlier

days. I don't *know* how I got into the groove, nor can I see how I stayed in it so placidly for many years; but this I do know—that my present teaching is a real pleasure, and before it was real drudgery."

"It could hardly be otherwise," said Miss Preston; "and if it was drudgery to you, what must it have been to those committed to your care?"

"O, I can see it all now," I cried; "the only thing that puzzles me at all is, that I was blind for so long."

"Selfishness seems to have been my hobby," said Miss Miller. "I have looked at everything from my own standpoint, and have considered, in all my school work, just how far such and such a thing would affect me — not what would be its results upon my school, but where I might count upon its influence. I think it has tended to make me indifferent toward the best interests of my school, and I regret the loss of years in which I might have done better."

The silence of conviction settled upon us, for who could cast the first stone at Miss Miller? Had we not all been carried by this hobby for years?

"I think that 'Independence' has been the hobby on which I've ambled at a slow going trot," said Miss Smith. "I've cared too little for law and order, too much for results; and have ridden rough shod right over the wishes of parents, superintendents and others, pitting my own judgment against that of every one who differed from me, as to methods, manner, principles or what not. I mean to defer a little more to the experience, observation and judgment of others," and she sat down as vigorously as she had spoken.

Miss Smith has less to blame herself for than most of us

have, for although she's quite likely to believe that her way is right she has a great deal of common sense, and that has helped her to see through many of the false educational notions of the day, and it has kept her out of much of the mummery that has been the bane of the rest of us.

Mr. Wheeler was the next speaker. "I believe that the 'Practical' hobby has been mine. Now I think that the practical side of things should be given consideration, a great deal of it, but not to the exclusion of all else."

"That is a common fault," said Mr. Johnson. "We have all been more or less warped by it I think, looking upon things of mere beauty as entirely without a mission, and upon studies which had no practical issue as being useless, when really either of these things may be of the greatest importance in modifying our natures and in making them symmetrical,"—all of which is true, and is now so conceded by the authorities in the educational world.

"Well," said Miss Bates, "I think I have clung tenaciously to 'Custom' for my hobby. I have been too averse to change, even when a change would have been best. What I have done and as I have done for years, has been my hobby; and I've been reluctant even to acknowledge progress."

"Just contrary to my experience," said Miss Ingersoll. "I believe that when I look over my list of delinquences, I shall find that I've given whip and rein to 'Change,' welcoming anything that gave indications of being something new, like the Athenians of old. Let any one suggest a new method in teaching or governing and I tried it, regardless of the probable differences of situation, time, and necessities. Only give me something new to work with, and I've

been happy in the work — even forgetful of the real aim of the work."

"That is common too," said Miss Preston. "Only let one teacher in a given situation, and with a given class, 'make a hit' in presenting a subject and instantly the wonderful results have been written up, commented on, and exaggerated, possibly, until everybody is on fire to try the same thing in the same way without reference to the great differences in teachers, pupils and times. We so lose our individuality and injure our work."

"Lecturing seems to have been the mule that has carried me," said Mr. Whipple; "and I have been so in love with the sound of my own voice, apparently, that no opportunity to listen to its music has been lost. I think a few words 'fitly spoken' would have been of more weight than all my harangues."

Again we were silenced, for few of us but felt that Mr. Whipple's confession would do for each of us.

"I fear that my hobby has been worse than any yet mentioned," said Miss Sherwood, with a scarlet spot burning upon each cheek. "I think now, in retrospect, that 'Menace' has entered into my school work at every opening. My school has been under the shadow of a threat of some kind from September until June every year — but it never shall be again. A threat is at best a weak weapon, and I hope never to be guilty of its use."

"Perhaps we had better all revise our decalogues," said Mr. Johnson; "and instead of 'Thou shalt not,' substitute 'Let us try not.' There is a principle within us that can be reached by an appeal to our better selves; but its opposite comes to the top whenever a thing is absolutely forbidden,

especially if there's a penalty attached. And right here I would suggest that we study Nature more. Let us study ourselves and our pupils, finding out the weaknesses and defects of the one, while we look up the necessities of the other. Let us profit not only by our own experience, but by that of our associates. Let us look below the surface of our teaching and see how much of it and what part is likely to take root; and if what we have done is not the very best that might have been, let us not be too proud to begin again in a new way, with a higher ideal before us, a more definite plan as to reaching it."

This seemed to be the Amen point; and here I leave it, only expressing the wish that it may be of as great use to others as it has to

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXVIII.

PHYSIOLOGY.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., October 21, 189–.

State Supt. of Public Instruction.

My Dear Sir: — It has been a general shaking-up week here, on the question of physiology, and the way that it should be taught, as well as some of the ways that are to be avoided.

We had a fairly good series of text books on the subject, and we did average work with them, I rather think; and yet none of it all seemed quite "practical" enough to suit my principal. I never saw a woman, nor a man, either, for that matter, who had the practical side of things down to so fine a point as she has!

We had been discussing the feasibility of having a special teacher come into the force, for the purpose of giving lessons on "How to Live" (and you may be sure that that was one of Miss Preston's ideas!) showing the teachers how to teach the lessons in a way that would appeal more strongly to child nature; for it is a fact that but very few of our children "take to" the study of physiology, even after they are pretty well grown; while many of the very younger ones actually have a distaste for it from the outset. So that even the most content and sanguine of us all would hardly dare to say that the study had been a success; and some of us might easily have been

persuaded to go a step farther, and that without damage to our consciences, and to say that the entire thing had been farcical from the start, and done (but this is sub-rosa) in the interest of the publisher who gave us the first set of books, all around, so that we would not only indorse it but send in orders for more, just as soon as new classes were formed.

No one knows (?) who did the log-rolling, but it was done; and for at least four or five years before the spirit of the new work had been felt by us, we had had attempts at smoothing out the work in physiology, and trying to make it count, in some way. But we had not succeeded. The meeting at which the topic came up had been looked forward to for another purpose; but it did not come amiss when some one proposed that we turn it into an experience meeting on the subject of physiology.

"I should like to know how you are all getting along, myself," said Mr. Johnson.

"Well, I can tell you that so far as my school is concerned it gives me more trouble than all the other work combined, in all the grades. I would give half of my salary to have it taken out of the curriculum," said Miss Wood.

"What is the nature of your trouble?" inquired Mr. Johnson, in that specially bland tone by which we have learned to look for words that mean something and that weigh about a thousand pounds each.

"I don't know that I could render a bill of particulars; but if there is anything that could be said and done against it which has not, then it is so much to the credit side of the account," was the somewhat indefinite reply.

"That is rather vague to attempt a remedy for," said Mr. Johnson.

"Oh, I can be more specific, if that is all," responded Miss Wood, hopefully. "Two years ago Mary Bryan's mother called to me to 'Come over' as I was passing their house, on the other side of the street. 'An' fwhat's that ye do be tachin' Mary now?' she asked, not unkindly, but with remonstrance in every syllable. 'An sure I don' wahnt her to be larnin' about her in'ards an' ahl that, while she's only a slip of a gurrul. Byes is different.'

'Oh, but we are only teaching the girls what they need to know,' I said. I'm not just sure that even that was strictly true; but it was the only thing I could think of, to say, that had a foundation of truth and yet might mollify her.

'Ah,' she replied, 'I don't know as 't'll help Molly anny to do the washin' 'n' ir'nin' 'f she's allus thinkin' an' thinkin' 'f her bones an' muscles, an' her brain cells an' in'ards. I guess the soap an' stairch, an' so on' 'll be more help than them things.'

Now there 's at least a show of common sense behind all this. Teachers have no monopoly on real good pedagogy; and it may be that in trying to give the children a good all-around education, we are actually omitting what will be of the most real benefit, in many individual cases; and I question if we have any right to do this!"

This was a new phase of Miss Wood's character, for she has not been wont to linger any too long on the side of the child, in any question; but none of us are at quite the same level that we were when Miss Preston came among us. She was the next speaker.

"I wish that we might have some one who is well qualified

for special work, who could go into all the schools, and give live, practical lessons on the best things to do, to eat, to wear, and so on, and so give the children a really good start in the things that they will actually need to know. Of course it is all right for them to know the technical name and the location of every bone and muscle in the body; but it seems to me more essential that they should know just how the bones are built up or injured; what foods promote their healthy growth; how the muscles are to be trained by judicious exercise, and how they are injured by idleness; how to avoid, as well as how to cure, some of the common troubles of the body, like earache, headache, colds, etc.; and how to care for the eyes, teeth, skin, hands, feet, hair, and other parts of the body."

That started the hubbub, but it was increased when Mr. Johnson said: "Miss Preston, I know that you have done good work in this line. Will you not tell us how?"

"That is not so difficult as it may be to get the consent of the Board to add the salary of the special teacher," she responded, with a smile, and then added: "I suppose that I began like most teachers, with a certain prescribed author, of whose pages my class was to learn so much to-day; a step farther to-morrow, and so through the week, with what reinforcement could be had at the end of the week by an ordinary review. But it was as dry and lifeless as most text-book work is.

That set me to thinking, and I tried at first by getting the children interested in what had given them pain. For instance, if a child had a toothache, he was better prepared to see the practical side of any study that would teach him

how to so care for the teeth that he would avoid the ache. It was always easy to lead an entire class, through one child's interest, in any such thing. If it were teeth that came up first as a subject, we made a very thorough study of their formation, shape, composition, etc., and we showed how acids would act upon the enamel; how the biting of threads, cracking of nuts, or holding of pins in the mouth would be injurious; how necessary to their health cleanliness is, and that extremes of hot and cold foods and drinks are to be avoided, as well as stiff brushes, poor washes and powders; and that a visit to the dentist, occasionally, even when it does not seem actually necessary, may be the means of averting trouble; that self denial in youth, while the teeth are growing, may save sorrow later and provide pleasure.

When Nellie Sutherland came to school with glasses on her eyes, because they had been weakened by over-much reading, often in a dim light, it was not difficult to interest her, and soon the others, in the general care of eyes. But if there was no trouble brewing, I took up things that I knew would be of interest, and after announcing the subject for the next lesson, would say: 'Find out all that you can about it, anywhere.' Sometimes the topic would have to be subdivided, and a part given to one of the class, another part to some one else; and so, until each had his special assignment, on which it was desired that he should be especially well prepared, and still have a good working knowledge of the entire lesson.

If one found a particularly good magazine article, that was placed to his credit, and he would read it to the class, as an honor. If some one knew of any one else that had

anything of interest in his division, he assumed the responsibility of asking for the loan, and its return. It all helped make lessons real, and valuable."

"Well, I should say it would! But will you tell me just where you expect to get any outside help on anything so dull as physiology?" asked Miss Sigourney, with more than apathetic interest visible.

"I am surprised, sometimes, at the really good points that can be fished out of the daily or weekly newspaper," was the serious reply. "To be sure, great care must be taken that the information is not merely rumor, and that the suggestions are helpful instead of contrawise. Magazines in this line are scientific, plentiful, and reasonable in price. I subscribe to 'Health Culture' and 'Good Health'; and the class takes 'The Delineator' for its health talks. Other magazines come our way, having a column or department devoted to health, and some newspapers also. We have made more than one book of clippings, and are saving for others. Then, too, we have access to publishers' and library catalogues; and when a topic of special significance or meager outline comes up, we go to the newer books, to see if anything farther has been put upon the market."

"How do you ever keep up your expense for all these things?" asked Mr. Lowell. "I should think that it would take an unlimited purse to buy so many books and subscribe to so many magazines."

"Oh, I have never found that I could keep taking things out of a cupboard without having it sometime become bare, like Mother Hubbard's. My books, etc., are my tools; and a certain part of my salary must go toward

what will improve me, or I will soon lose my salary! The proportion is small, very; and yet the personal loss would be very great if I did otherwise."

Tools, for teaching, an investment! That was a drop idea to some of us that I could name, but won't.

Miss Preston doesn't say to anyone in her class: "Recite the first paragraph about the circulation of the blood," but instead: "Who has an illustration, this morning, of the way in which the blood passes from lungs to heart and back? Who can name the organs through which the blood passes in making a round trip, and how long it takes? Who knows of some things that feed the blood? That impoverish it? Who will give me a paper, to-morrow, on the very best way to aid circulation of the blood? Ah, thank you, Albert. Now I want the rest of you to watch for his good points, but don't let him leave out any, nor put in bad ones."

Then she always calls for authorities, so that each one knows the author of his information, and also that he can not be credited with what is spurious. In cases of doubt or disagreement, here as elsewhere, they consult together, weigh the evidence, and decide upon the preponderance; so that no text book is necessarily swallowed whole, covers and all. The pupils are actually trained to think, and to do it intelligently, even in so small a matter as physiology.

Not a complaint has come to her, so far as I can see, about the pursuit of the study, for she has made it so practical; and she wants some one to do just this with the subject in all the schools. That is why she is asking for a "special" teacher, and I'm inclined to think she's right in saying that the perfunctory teaching of physiology

has more to do with the dislike of children for it than any other one thing. Indeed, I have heard one teacher say in her presence that she hated it, and never "took" any more of it than was necessary to pass her, in the examination!

Now we are on the eve of another innovation, for Miss Preston wants to have Manual Training introduced, and made a part of the every-day work. More of that, later, from

Yours Very Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXIX.

THE TEACHING OF HISTORY.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Nov. 19, 189–.

TO HON. —

State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

My Dear Sir:—Such a buzzing as was started when Professor Macomber proposed the discussion of History! It was like a swarm of bees let loose; and here are some of the suggestions, objections, etc., as they flashed in the pan:

"I don't believe that history has any place in the primary department any way. Children need to be taught to read and to use the science of numbers correctly, before they go into anything as dry as history," was Miss Sigourney's first cannon ball.

"Dry?" burst forth from Professor Macomber. "You amaze me! History, with its twin sisters, geography and biography, dry? Why, where would you get a more juicy topic, in the entire curriculum?" The dapper little man looked the unutterable things that he felt but dared not speak, and Miss Sigourney was most becomingly subdued. Hypnotism affects so many in that way! Now all that dash and bluster only ruffled me; for while I do not at all agree with Miss Sigourney (that is, I don't now; and I'm not bound to incriminate myself by telling what I thought of anything outside of the "three R's" before Miss Preston

had breathed upon my half-dead soul, and revivified it!) I just hated to hear him agonize in that way.

"Let us call for opinions and do the thing with some show of order," said Mr. Johnson, a little shortly, that is, shortly for him, in his reconstruction manner. So the roll was called, much after the old-time way, with this difference, that now there was actually something to be said and thought when the names were announced.

Miss Wardwell was the first, for the "alphabet" was read from the further end first this time. "I am too poor a teacher of anything to be worth much in the way of advice," was the humble pie with which she started to regale us; but she soon forgot the dessert end, and gave us some really solid food for thought in the following: "I keep a list of the books on this subject, and buy as many as I can afford to, even picking them up at the second-hand store. Then I have a 'Loan Library' to piece out with, gathered from among the pupils, each one becoming responsible for one volume, to be used by the class. Each member has a turn at taking charge of the library; and each has the benefit of what the rest bring in. In this way I have secured the interest and coöperation of the pupils, and often of outsiders. It enlarges the scope of the children's knowledge as to the historical writers, and of the difference in their styles; and I consider these good points."

"And so they are," assented Mr. Johnson, his temporary affection passing away with its direct cause. "Do you make a note of the publisher's name?"

"Yes, and of the address; also of the price and size of the book, name of the author, and date of publication, so that we may be sure of those that are up to date."

I made a mental note of this, but didn't really want to be conspicuous by using a pencil, on what seemed a trivial point. Miss Preston did, though, and I was not surprised to hear her say: "I'm so glad that you brought out that point, Miss Wardwell; for I think that we ought to know about the new, even while they may not be any improvement on the old. New and old are relative terms any way."

Others spoke, and soon all formality went to the winds, before the breath of inspiration. Mr. Johnson said: "I have never advocated the introduction of history into the lower grades, but I am beginning to think that we should do so."

"I am sure of it," said Miss Preston. "It presupposes, of course, that we will proceed from the known to the unknown, and so I always teach it backwards!"

"Mercy! What a way!" exclaimed Miss Wood. Then, as if in apology for seeming rudeness, she added: "Will you not kindly give us the wherefore? I have been so long accustomed to following my normal school methods, to the letter, that I sometimes forget that it is the spirit that giveth life, while the letter killeth. Perhaps that's why my history classes are a flat failure. I'd like to do better work."

"Nearly all children, even up to a hundred years old, care more for the events that are passing, the people who are doing the world's work of to-day, than they do about the dead past. I have no trouble in getting them interested in talking about General Shafter, Admiral Dewey, and President McKinley. From these I can lead them back, a little at a time, to other presidents, other generals, and the events in connection with their names and lives; whereas,

had I begun with the strangers, I should not have been so easily able to get or hold attention from the start. Then, too, local history has a charm, all its own. 'My father did so and so,' or 'My grandfather was there,' is not uncommon, when I am leading them in the historical paths that surround our own town, or county; and from there to the state and out into the entire country is but a series of easily graded steps!"

"And do you do this with advanced classes, too?" asked Mr. Lowell.

"Yes, unless the classes have already been well drilled in home history and current events."

"Just how do you hear a lesson in history for an advanced class, Miss Preston?" asked Professor Macomber.

"That depends so much upon class, time, and other circumstances that it is hard to tell off-hand. Generally, though, I announce the topic and quote my side-lights. Then I divide the lesson into two parts: a reading period, which is always preliminary, a day in advance, and a recitation period for the lesson day.

In the reading lesson I look out for pronunciation, tone, articulation, and the spelling of new or unfamiliar words. I look out, too, for the language of the historian, which is not always strictly rhetorical. I call upon some one to tell all that he knows, of a certain point in the lesson—not confining him to the text book work, but requiring that he quote his authority, in order that we may know whether or not it is reliable; for I do not want the children to get in the habit of placing too much confidence in rumor, nor in merely newspaper headlines. Neither do I check his use of text-book language, if I find that he uses it with in-

telligence; although I do not allow a mumbling of words whose meaning is not grasped. When he has gone as far as he can, without prompting, on the point under consideration, I call on others to come in for the finish.

Sometimes I call for volunteer recitations, instead of appointing some one to tell what he knows. At other times I ask questions; or occasionally I let one division of the class do the questioning—it may be boys against girls, or those on one seat as opposed to those on another; any way so as to get up a little good-natured rivalry, which I try to hold within desirable limits."

"Do you review often?" asked Mr. Johnson.

"Yes. Every lesson is a review, for we find the connecting link between the lessons that have preceded and the one before us. Once a week we write up whatever of interest has appealed most strongly to each, and about once a month we write on a given topic. Our oral reviews are carried on mainly as 'conversation' lessons; for I have found that it is desirable to teach conversation, and have but little time for it as a special study.

We have debates, too, and sometimes these are a part of a historical program, for a 'public.' A 'School Paper' on history, to which all members of the class contribute, is a sometimes pleasant feature.

We also have a 'History Club,' and occasionally a 'History Social' at my boarding place or at the home of some one of the class.

If the subject is especially dull at any given point where I consider it essential that all should be well grounded in the facts, as well as in the whys of the occasion, I simply invest that recitation with the form of a game, perhaps

that of 'Twenty Questions,' or a 'Question Box,' or to be 'played' like 'Authors' from cards that we have prepared.

A great deal of valuable information is gotten in these ways, easily, and without the friction that is sometimes attendant upon the teaching of history in the regular way; but I always mean to put in enough of the regular work to preserve the thought of study, and of digging for information."

"Don't you often combine other things with your history lesson?" asked Professor Macomber, with interest. History is one of his (relatively!) strong points, of which he seems to have none too many.

"I try to 'dovetail' all my work, and find it especially easy to connect the teaching of history with that of literature, geography, civil government, patriotism, biography, reading, etc., composition, debating, and kindred subjects, besides the topics already mentioned," was the reply.

"I am sure that we can all get something, by way of hints, as to the teaching of history, from this little talk," said Mr. Johnson, "and I should be glad to hear from any others who have any 'bargains' to offer."

Really, our Superintendent is getting facetious, or else he is learning that he can not always catch pedagogical fish on a pedantic hook that is baited with didactics! I am sure that we all appreciate this change in him, even if we seem slow to copy it.

On recall, Miss Preston added: "If a place is mentioned, in the history lesson, we try to find out all that we can about the place, and how it came to be brought into this group of events, as well as to see how it was affected thereby. And we do much the same if a person is men-

tioned. We try to find out the leading characteristics, what produced them, and what possibilities might have changed them all. And so of a condition: how it affected men, time, and places; how the condition might have been changed or avoided; what was the primary cause of the condition, and whatever else pertained to it. We are all on the *qui vive* to apply our other reading matter to the history lessons; so the newspapers, magazines, and library books get a scanning; and each one brings the result of his search, for the benefit of all. This keeps the ball rolling, and the interest never flags."

I shouldn't think that it could! With all that thought spent on it, what study would not teem with living interest? Who would call even psychology "dry," if some one would come down from the highest rounds of the ladder, where most of our philosophic speakers perch, with their heads in the clouds, crumbling stars to scatter upon us poor mortals below, when all that we want is just common bread crumbs!

I have just heard it whispered that we are to have a little talk on practical psychology at our next meeting, of which — if it is worth while — I will write you.

Very Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXX.

NATURE WORK.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Dec. 10, 189–.

My Dear Superintendent: — It was more than an ordinary gathering that discussed the pros and cons of Nature Work at our last meeting. Miss Sigourney had cried out against its introduction into an already overburdened curriculum, and as a "fad" that had neither rhyme nor reason to give it an excuse for existence, and one that would pass with a lot of other senseless trash that had already been relegated to the back yard.

Really, the picture that she drew was not altogether untruthful; but it seemed to me that if the work was once entered upon in the right spirit it had great capabilities for good, and that through it almost any child may be awakened to an interest in his other work.

But what can you expect, when one-half of the work that is done in the name of Nature might better be spelled mechanical, and that done without heart, knowledge, or sympathy? Why, you may not be ready to believe what I actually saw, in one of our schools, recently, where I had stopped to do an errand for Miss Preston; but one of the teachers was actually killing a butterfly, for mounting, and that in the presence of a class of tiny children who should have been taught, instead, to respect the life that God had given, and to harm nothing that breathed!

But Miss Sigourney was followed by a mild protest from Professor Lowell, who said, half apologetically: "I think that if our Nature Work was less cut-and-dried in its presentation we might get more out of it."

"Just what do you mean, Mr. Lowell?" asked Miss Sigourney.

"Why, I mean that, somehow, our Nature Work seems to have, in some way, been confined to animals; and while it is true that this is a large field, and one that perhaps none of us ever expects to cover in its entirety, yet many children are even more interested, at times, in some other things. I have found that if a child has any great natural repugnance, for instance, to studying a caterpillar or an earthworm, it is just as well to lead him to consider something else in the wide realm of Nature, for awhile — say: rocks, clouds, hills, rivers, or even some of the common fruits, flowers, and vegetables. Nearly all children love to talk, study, and write about the things with which they are on speaking acquaintance; but not all are ready to be invested with heavenly sympathy for creeping and crawling things, at the outset."

That seemed to be the signal for Miss Preston's welcome voice, and she said, with some warmth: "I think that you are right, Mr. Lowell. There are but few children who do not love to see, hear, and talk of growing things. From these, they may easily be led into other avenues of thinking, seeing, hearing and speech. But it must all be done judiciously. I have seen a lesson on earth-worms made so repugnant to childhood that nothing could ever efface its effects; and more than one child has been nauseated, and even made hysterical, in some instances, by the cutting up

of a pig's eye, or the analysis of a cow's heart, in the interest of Nature or Science, before a class that had not been trained up to it. We need to take children as we find them, and not force them beyond what they can bear, even in Nature Work."

"Would you mind telling us just how you begin the work, Miss Preston?" asked Mr. Johnson, just a little anxiously, for he had but recently returned from the state convention, where most of the papers, and much of the discussion, had been on this now popular theme.

"Not in the least, although I am but a tyro, and presume that others have accomplished equally good results; and I want to hear from them. I think, with Professor Lowell, that the realm of Nature is so wide that we need neither be limited to any one of the three kingdoms, nor to any department of them, for our material. I believe that we have always been doing Nature Work, even though it may have been under the more specific names of botany, geology, meteorology, or what not. Just now it is all lumped off in what sounds well; but the good Mother Nature herself is unchanged.

I begin with whatever seems to appeal most easily or strongly to the class in hand. Perhaps in the early spring I might find a few clusters of strawberries, in the field, and bring them in, roots, vines, blossoms, stems, fruit, or whatever was to be had. I should be quite likely, first, to put some part of the specimens of each child's desk, and have an 'observation' lesson, asking each one to tell me what he saw. The 'reports' would be written on the board, by some of the older ones; and when the subject had been quite thoroughly canvassed, I would let them paint, or

draw, or 'brush' the object. If that filled up all the time that I had for that lesson, a 'conversation' lesson might be given the next day, in which I would lead the children to the discovery of new facts, that had escaped their attention. An 'information' lesson would follow, from my own fund, to add to theirs. If I knew anything of the history, geography, literature, or classification of the object, that might be of use or interest, this is the point where it would seem most effective. All would be followed by an outline, on the board, in which the leading points would be mentioned by a word or two, and some reference to where further information might be secured; and then I would give opportunity for each to put it in writing, by self, or by proxy if too young to write easily."

"Is this the method that you follow throughout the year?" asked Miss Sigourney, with apparent interest.

"Yes, with variations. In winter, I have let the children study snow flakes, icicles, wind, sunsets, stars, water, winter birds, frost, evergreens, animals, etc. The spring and summer months seem more prolific, at the first glance; but the winter in full of interesting objects. Heat, cold, and similar topics, are alive with questions that even puzzle me at times; and I have to study ahead of the little ones, in order to keep pace with their great interest."

This is absolutely true, for I know that when Miss Preston had hushed one little timid girl's fear of thunder, during a storm that broke with sudden intensity one afternoon, she had opened the subject of electricity; and the children became so enthusiastic that it was not until she had promised to give them one of her "Five Minute Talks" on the subject, daily, that they could be induced to give it

up for the regular work; and once they were started on it, she had to study at every opportunity, to be ready with answers for their numerous questions. She never seems to mind saying "I don't know," but never fails to add: "But I will find out," which she does, even at the expense of rest, pleasure (I ought not to say that, for her school *is* her pleasure), social life, and everything else. But—

"Did I hear that you had a hen and chickens in your school, last week, Miss Preston, for study?" asked Mr. Macomber.

Now, Mr. Macomber is Mr. Johnson's new assistant. He is a fine theorist, and as he has studied "pedagogy" at a foreign university, he has little or no respect for that which has been accquired simply by years of devotion to the work and its practical application. Lacking the sheep-skin of Jena University, there is no pedagogy, for him. With his florid complexion, his blonde mustache, with which he plays almost constantly, and his pink shirt-front, he can frown down any of us "old fogies," no matter how earnestly we are trying to do our best, and to seek the light. He thinks that he is that "light," and because we are not all ready to read, sing, and pray, by what he can furnish to us, educationally, he is at swords' points with most of us, all the time. He has seldom dared to tackle Miss Preston, for she's no common-sense-y that she would run a pin into his theories so soon that they'd all collapse at the touch. So we were on the *qui vive* to see if she would take him seriously now.

"Why, I can hardly tell what you may have heard, Dr. Macomber, but I not only had a hen and chickens there, and was very happy in having the opportunity to

study some points myself, but the children were doubly so," she returned, gravely.

"Will you tell me just what the object was?" he pursued, perhaps a little reckless of consequences to his egoism.

"Our lesson that day had been about the hen, and I knew that Biddy and her family would prove a help. So I brought them or had them brought. Another time, when the lesson was on 'Rodents' I had a mouse, a rat in a trap, and a squirrel. And the children got a much better idea of 'gnawers' than they could have done from pictures; for we fed them all, and the little animals seemed to enjoy the novelty quite as much as the children did."

"Suppose that you were studying the horse, Miss Preston," said Professor Macomber. "Would you bring an equine into the school?"

I could see that Mr. Johnson was annoyed at this impertinent quizzing by his subordinate; for whatever may have been his feeling regarding Miss Preston, long ago, it is certain that she has long been his ideal teacher, his court of appeals on all questions of methods or management. She replied slowly:

"I seldom cross a bridge until I at least see the river; but, if there were no horses to be seen outside of the schoolroom, I am not sure that I should fear fatal results from bringing one to the door for examination!"

That settled him, but our talk overflowed into the hall, down the stairs, and out upon the street.

Mr. Macomber had kept a little live alligator on his desk on the platform, up to this time; and one of the older girls

had begged him to release it, or to put it out of her sight; for she said that she was actually afraid of it, and that after it had haunted her all day (her desk was right in front of it) she was so nervous that she would go home and dream about it! And I didn't much wonder, for it was a most repulsive looking little thing. I noticed soon after that day, that the alligator was not there; but I have never had the temerity to ask what had become of it. Curiosity is not my strong point, any way.

And so we are studying Nature, now, in Nature's way, not in any cold, superficial manner — as if it were done to keep up the average; but we have beans, peas, corn, watermelons, etc., planted in flower pots, boxes, or whatever comes handy, in the school-houses; and other things are growing out of doors, in our school-gardens, all over the city.

We take up the most timely thing in a broad way, and "correlate" as we go, not for the simple sake of correlation, which is nothing, of itself, but in order to keep the connecting links unbroken, and to show the child the dependence and the interdependence of one thing with another.

"There is Nature Work in a slice of bread, a bit of ribbon, a piece of bark, a banana or an orange, just as truly as there is in worms, moths, caterpillars, and butterflies," is Miss Preston's creed, and her practice accords with it; "and I think that no teacher need say: 'I am in the city, so can not be expected to have any Nature Work in my school,' nor that she will be excused for her neglect, so long as the markets afford fish, flesh, and fowl, to say nothing of fruits and flowers!

We must reach the children by what is nearest to them, first, and from that point lead them out as far as may be."

I believe it. Don't you?

I am Very Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXXI.

MANUAL TRAINING.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Jan. 5, 189–.

SUPT. PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

My Dear Mr.——:—It has come, and to stay! I mean the cooking class, the sewing class, the metal and the wood work! It is so long since I have had a chance to write, owing to the new work, and all that it means, that I shall have to go back, almost a year and a half.

As I have often hinted, Miss Preston has made things "dovetail" and do it so naturally, that when she attempted such an innovation as this, even, it has come easily, more so than less practical help would, to others.

One of the Board dropped into the building one day, while she was with one of the classes up stairs, the grade teacher being away that day, sick. I wanted him to wait, and let me send a boy up, to tell her that Mr. Miller was there; but no, he would go right up stairs, he said. I didn't think that it was just the thing, but I am no hand to argue. (I suppose that I might have been a principal myself, by this time, if I had been able to speak up more promptly. I can think fast enough, but I just never can talk.) So off he went.

I found out afterwards that she was just in the midst of a lesson with the physiology class, and it was about "Food Values." She was just saying: "And if I had my little oil

stove here, I would demonstrate it for you. (Some difference of opinion had arisen about the proper cooking of an egg.) I think I will try to get it brought over, tomorrow, so that we can do a little experimenting—" when in walked Mr. Miller, after a light knock. He says that he shall never forget the expression of rapt interest on the faces of the class before him. Not one bit of attention did they have for him, unless it was a politely concealed impatience that he should interrupt. With the enthusiasm which is born of contact with her teaching, and without stopping to weigh consequences, to himself or the Board, he asked: "Did I hear you wish that you had a stove, Miss Preston?" gravely.

"Perhaps so. I sometimes think that mere 'book' knowledge doesn't weigh as much, to the yard, as experimental information does. Just now we were all ready to apply a little bit of our lesson in physiology to cooking. You know that these two, and chemistry, walk hand in hand, through our real life."

"I know that they ought to, if they don't. And if a stove or anything else, within my means, is necessary to the blending of the useful with the theoretical, you shall have it. In fact, I came up this afternoon mainly for the purpose of talking over this very subject with you. It was brought up, at the Board meeting, last night. I was not at all prepared to vote for it then, believing it to be simply one more fad that would fade, in time. But, Miss Preston, you have put reality and life into this lesson, and I should be more than glad to further your plans."

So now we have a full fledged cooking school, a teacher of sewing, knitting, and crocheting for the girls; a class in

woodwork, and another in metal work, among the boys; and best of all, perhaps, outside of the enthusiasm of the pupils themselves, is the fact that from first to last there has not been one word of complaint from taxpayers, nor from parents who are not taxpayers! The whole place is interested; and if we are not careful, Miss Preston will be done in wax and put on exhibition, for she was the prime mover of it all.

The students are in no way less studious, but on the contrary, more work is done, and more cheerfully, in the chemistry and botany, by the girls, now that they can apply the lessons; and more by the boys, in drawing, because they will use that in the wood working, etc. Greater comradeship is shown, too; and sympathy seems to have had a big revival.

But perhaps the sentiment of the city will best be shown by an extract from one of the morning papers . . . and the editor has not given his unqualified approval, heretofore, to any part of our curriculum:

> Our School Board seems at last to have come to its senses, in establishing classes for manual training, for such pupils as are at all likely to need this in their after life. Personally, I hope to see the day when every child will have this instruction whether he asks for it or not.
>
> There has been too much brain culture, and too little body, heart, and hand training, in our public shools, for a generation or more. It has developed a sort of false notion as to the place that manual labor has on earth; and the result has been the breeding a set of kid-glove-and-silk-stocking young men and women, who must not soil their hands, no matter what the necessity for self-support.
>
> There has been an over-production of slip-shod stenographers, who could only get five dollars a week, and weren't worth that,

and of dainty clerks who had neither mind nor muscle that would help lift them beyond the pink ribbons which they could measure off much faster than they could calculate the cost for. And all this time we have been suffering from tough steaks, poorly made coffee, and a dearth of honest laborers at any price.

I hail the day when the schools will teach everything that belongs to housekeeping, gardening, carpentry, etc., and when every child will be given his birthright privilege of an education that shall be compulsory if it must, in fitting him for a useful place in life. The ornamental may safely be left to the accident of fortune, while the child is being given something that will keep him from forced idleness and the doom of poverty in a land of plenty, because he does not know how to do one useful thing while there is a vast army of waiting applicants for every place that hires any one for the so-called 'polite' services.

So long as more than nine tenths of our school population never get beyond the primary department, and but few of the remainder ever reach the high school, it is just as well that we pay first attention to the speaking needs of the vast majority. 'The greatest good to the greatest number,' must be the motto, hereafter, and not 'How much show for the money.'

I understand that one of the women teachers is at the bottom of the movement . . . . and it is but one more instance of the truth that in some things woman is a more capable being than man; and one of these points of superiority is easily lodged in the education of the young.

Woman may not be a first-class logician, at all times; but she's bound to learn by experience, which is more than I can say for my own sex.

Let us have more industrial classes, by all means, and more good teachers of manual training; and let us never be satisfied short of experimental farms, kitchens, hospitals, offices, etc.

Well, we are the talk of the country; and every day brings someone from abroad to see us, and to study (or to criticise adversely) our system. But no matter; so long as our own taxpayers are satisfied, and our leading men and

women, we do not need to care what others think. Besides, the benefit is so apparent, already, in the chief factor to be considered, the children, that we cannot be too grateful to the little woman who has brought it all about, and so quietly, with no friction, even among the teachers! We are certainly in danger of making a heroine of her, and that she would dislike! She stays in the background for everything except her school; and by "her school" I mean any school, for she is as broad as she is revolutionary, which is saying a good deal, and she makes any school or child *hers*.

I must tell you one little circumstance, as it is indicative of the "attitude" of our patrons:

Our cooking class had been having a lesson on oysters, in connection with their natural history, and they had been taught how to make a most savory stew of the toothsome bivalves. One of the older girls, Nellie Munson, who had taken but little interest in the lessons on the care of a stove, building of fires, and similar things, was greatly interested in this lesson, and said to Miss Williams, the cooking class teacher:

"Oh, Miss Williams! May I learn how to make the stew, too? (She was one of the 'housekeepers' for that day.) Papa is so fond of it, and Bridget never has good luck with it."

Pleased that Nellie's "soft" spot in cooking had been found, Miss Williams arranged a change, so that Nellie might use the stove and note book, together with the materials that went with the stew, instead of handling the dishpan, as would have been necessary in her place as housekeeper for the day.

The next day Nellie brought a note to Miss Preston, and handed it to her with a beaming smile. It was from Judge Munson, and read:

MISS H. M. PRESTON:

Dear Madam: I was more than delighted, last night, on my return from the office, to find a most savory stew of oysters provided for dinner. I soon found that the dish was the product of my Nellie's skill in cookery, acquired at your school; and I thank you for it, and for all that it means.

Will you not accept an invitation to dine with us, on Friday evening, at six? I should like to plan a little with you, for it seems to me that you have struck the keynote of education, in teaching the useful things! My little motherless girl will need to learn the art of home-making and housekeeping from a domestic, if it is not taught in the school—as I have certainly never dreamed would be possible. Command me, if I can be of any service, as I trust that I may.

Your's, Obed'tly,

FRANCIS B. MUNSON.

From that time there has been no trouble in getting the interest of Miss Nellie, nor, indeed, of any of the pupils!

Cordially,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXXII.

FROM KINDERGARTEN TO PRIMARY.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., Jan. 23, 189–.

Dear Mr. ——— :— We are quite excited over the kindergarten question, or questions, for more than one has come up to trouble us. It has been like this:

In his real anxiety to do just the right thing, Mr. Johnson has let the pendulum swing as far to leeward as it used to be to windward; and instead of our schools being places for study and mental effort, development and progress, there is some danger of there being just criticisms on the score of their becoming as wishy-washy now as they were mechanical previously! The introduction of a kindergarten department into each, besides being a real innovation, has been a constant source of friction between the kindergarten and grade teachers; and neither side seems entirely exempt from blame. On Friday last we were the recipients of a note from Mr. Johnson to this effect:

> If you are interested in the work of the lower grades, will you not try to be present, with some helpful suggestion, on Saturday morning, at half-past ten, at the usual place of meeting, for the purpose of effecting something like a systematic schedule? I regret feeling obliged to break into your holiday, and will try to make it up to you later.

I wanted very much to ask Miss Preston what she would do, for I knew that she had strong convictions along this

very line, although she has had no trouble, not even the appearance of any, with the very "raw" but equally conceited "kindergartner" who fell to our share; but she was so busy that I did not even have a chance to mention it to her! Privately, I have thought, all the time, that Mr. Johnson had sent Miss Field to our school, instead of to any other, because he knew that Miss Preston had the tact which would make it possible, even if not easy, to "get along" with her, which most of the other principals would lack. However, that is anticipating!

Nearly every principal and grade teacher was present; and when you consider the form of the request, you may deduce the fact that we are somewhat wider awake than we were two or three years ago, before we had the direct inspiration that Miss Preston's work has been to us.

"We will hear from the kindergarten teachers first," began Mr. Johnson, as soon as possible after we had assembled. Miss Field was on her feet in a moment. She is neither backward nor in the least abashed by the feeling of gross incompetence. She has "graduated"; and although she may have nothing but a technical knowledge of her subject, she does not counsel with her principal, except when Miss Preston takes the initiative.

"I think that the kindergarten teachers ought to have better rooms, a fuller equipment, and more liberty of action," she began, but Mr. Johnson hastened to interrupt her with: "That's right. Make all your wants and wishes known, but please be specific and itemize your bill! Don't leave us to guess at what you mean."

"Oh," she replied, airily, "my own room is all right. Miss Preston is the darlingest principal, and my flock of

little ones just too cute for anything. We're all right. I only spoke on general principles."

Miss Lewis was the next kindergartner to take advantage of the open door. She is quite a little older than Miss Field, and with none of the apparent flippancy which characterizes the younger damozel. "I think that an occasional conference between the primary teachers and kindergartners would help to an understanding more quickly than anything else. Some of us are too closely tied to all that is old, while others fail to recognize any merit in aught that is new. Neither is quite right; for with education and experience we should be able to sift the desirable from what is merely theory or technical, and so secure the best from all quarters. If the one side can be but magnanimous and the other tractable, we ought to find all parts of the work suited to develop as a whole, no one part overshadowing any other, and none giving way to the rest."

"That is what I think," urged Mr. Johnson. "If other school systems have been benefited by the introduction of kindergartens, why should not we? Our Board of Education is able and willing to do what is necessary in the way of expense; and it does seem as though we ought to be able to work out the pedagogical side of the question, and to do it to the advantage of all concerned." He looked a little worried, but not so testy as he used to when things did not run smoothly.

"I don't know just how it is with the rest of you, I am sure," said Miss Wood; "but I think that there is more damage accruing to both child and teacher from the kindergarten nonsense than all the good that ever comes from it will be able to balance."

"Will you not please be definite, Miss Wood?" asked the superintendent, a trifle flurried and anxious.

"I mean just thus: The kindergarten children who get promoted to my room have no ideas of order, obedience, nor steady work. If I cannot let them play all the time they are unhappy; and as for respect, that is not to be thought of, from them." She was excited, and her voice seemed to indicate that she had reached the jumping-off place.

Miss Wells was on her feet in an instant, and was talking with unusual fervor. While no one seemed to have any war paint on, it did look as though fires that had been smoldering were all breaking out at once. I partly knew what the trouble was, and could guess at more; but being only an assistant, I don't feel like mixing up any too much even yet, although I must own up to a greater sense of responsibility than I used to have.

"I can say 'Amen' to all that Miss Wood has said, besides giving other impressions of a personal experience with kindergarten-trained children. I prefer them to come to me in the ignorance of all school life and work which has characterized our first-term children until recently. They are more teachable, and less work has to be done to put them in the way of good, genuine study. They now have no idea of consecutive thought; and as for really attempting anything that does not promise pleasure or some form of play, I might as well talk to the wind as try to get anything out of the recently promoted. I never had such a state of affairs before, and shall be glad if we may go back to the old way."

Here was a bomb, but before it had had time to burst,

and so carry ruin, Miss Preston was saying, in her suavest tones, and with her most gracious manner: "I hope that the kindergarten department will not be relegated to the woodshed of our educational workshops until it has at least had a fair trial. I do not think that we can always tell just what a man's character is by the color of his hair nor by the cut of his coat; nor do I believe in a wholesale condemnation of something that so many really great educators and profound thinkers have endorsed. Surely, there must be a germ of good in it, that we may all find and make our own," gently, but none the less forcefully. I have noticed that the force of many of Miss Preston's arguments is in an inverse ratio as to the gentleness; and when she purposes to be especially effective she is both calm and polite, even to an unusual degree.

"Can you suggest anything?" asked Mr. Johnson, his face lighting up.

"I am inclined to think that the step between the kindergarten and the primary department is rather too long for the little minds, and perhaps, too, for the little bodies. So I have tried to bridge this by improvising some work, of a play or recreative nature, that may be used while the little folks are getting a bit wonted to the new order of things. I have had paint boxes, so that they could paint, after the regular lessons had been given. I have let them cut out pictures for the school scrap book; and if an especially neat hand was found, I would let the little owner do the pasting for this treasured volume. I have let them cut letters for our letter boxes, and words for word boxes. I have had 'cut up stories' for them to divide into paragraphs, with the promise that they should have the

story for to-morrow's reading lesson. I have let them string so many kernels of popcorn, and so many cranberries, and then find how many of each they had, for number work. I try to keep them busy, and in a legitimate way, until they are so used to the routine of alternating work and play that they have ceased to rebel at the notion of work, if there has been any such inclination, as I rather think there has at times. We cannot grow grapes from thistles; nor should we expect too much from the kindergarten. It is a good auxiliary, but we have, perhaps, demanded that it bear the whole burden of home and school."

"And I thank you for the word, Miss Preston," said Miss Lewis, her eyes filling with tears. "I have often felt my own incompetence, which a seeming want of sympathy has not diminished. I do want to do good work, and to help the little ones to a realizing of what school with all its opportunities means; but I am never quite sure that some one is not throwing cold water on what is to me one of the most beautiful systems of teaching the young, but which has found so few truthful interpreters. We are all liable to make mistakes, and I am anxious to confer with any who can help. It is a long time since I studied under a trainer, and I have perhaps grown rusty, but would like to apply what I have learned, and to learn as much more as I can. I love this part of the work as I do no other, and yet I know that it needs the other to supplement this. We ought to work together, and in perfect accord, instead of one eying the other, with only adverse criticism as a goal."

"I am sure that Miss Lewis is right, as I hope that we all are in part," said Miss Preston. "If we honestly want

to help each other, it will not be difficult. We all know that the natural atmosphere of the child is play, and that few of us ever work from choice, even after we are grown up; so the love of work must be taught.

The kindergarten plays have their good effects, too, in bringing the muscles under the control that will be needed later for penmanship, drawing, and kindred things. The child's senses are being trained when he is playing the guessing games, or working with blocks of clay or other kindergarten material. The relationship of the family is taught, and trained into the child's mind with the songs, stories, and plays of birds and animals. The great world of industry is opened to the childish mind through the songs and stories of trade and industry, and the child is brought into direct and close sympathy with the working world. So, too, of citizenship. The duties of policemen, firemen, etc., become a part of the daily play; and civic life is no longer strange.

But we must provide a step between the highest kindergarten work and the lowest primary grade; for I believe that there is the 'hitch.' From the informal life of the one to the rigid rules of the other is a gap that needs a plank. Can we not put in some good work that shall be useful, but not too hard — pleasant, but with its own broadening influence on the little lives? Shall we not give them easy lessons on birds, flowers, shells, fruits, vegetables, whatever is of interest to them, things with which they come in contact, but about which they have not been taught regularly? Should we have any trouble in giving a lesson on a rose, a plate of strawberries, a basket of peaches, a bag of peanuts, or a dish of popcorn?"

"That's it! That's just what we needed!" said Mr. Johnson, with great enthusiasm. "The kindergarten has come to stay, and we must give it a helping hand, a crutch even, if necessary; but we must not turn it out."

Nor shall we. There was a sprinkling of tears as some of the kindergarten teachers went up to shake hands with Miss Preston, and I noticed that even Miss Field had lost her flippant air, and was conferring with the others.

I will advise you of the outcome later.

Very Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXXIII.

PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGY.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., March 15, 189–.

Hon. ——, State Supt., etc.

My Dear Sir:—I would never have believed that so many of the plain, practical, every-day sort of teachers, could be induced to look into, much less to really become enthusiastic over, anything that has always seemed to me so abstruse, and of so little working value as psychology.

Yet here we are, "doing time" not on apperception, concepts, and other beauties of the really practical science, but on such homely divisions of it as Cultivation of the Will, Memory Training, Control of Thought, of Sleep, of Worry, of Nerves, of Health; Psychology of Diet, of Dress, of Humor, of Hope, of Labor, Study and Rest; Control of Fear, of Likes and Dislikes, and many other similar topics.

I can only give you a few hints, and let you judge of just what we are accomplishing. The assignment for last week had been announced the week before, and by Mr. Johnson; for with all his improvement, he is still inclined to run after false gods, and to tie us all down, to a certain extent, to his ideas. He is really trying to get up to the high plane from which Miss Preston sees and acts; but it is a little difficult, when one has so long been steeped in one idea, to introduce another; so when the requests for next week's topic were handed in, and one paper said:

"I think we ought to do something with psychology," he said at once: "That is a purely empirical science. Still, if any of you think that it would be the thing to take up next, I have no objection. Each one may bring whatever he has found most interesting to him. I almost said whatever he had found most helpful; but psychology is more likely to help the college student who is fitting for the law, medicine, or some other profession, rather than that of teaching."

Miss Preston was not at that meeting, although I strongly suspected that she was the writer of the paper, so the announcement fell in comparative silence.

It was not quite so still, however, when the meeting opened last week. Mr. Johnson was not in the chair, and he began by asking: "Have any of you anything to say about the subject in hand?"

Now, I had one or two thoughts, not very large ones; but I do hate to be the first speaker, or the first anything, and so I waited. Not so Miss Preston, for she was on her feet, and recognized, so quickly that it almost took my breath away.

"I believe that our psychology should be reduced to the every-day wants of the every-day teacher, at first. Then, when we are ready for more abstract and perhaps more theoretical or experimental work, we can take up those parts of it."

"Will you please tell us, Miss Preston, just how you have succeeded in finding anything really practical in so deep a study? I have honestly tried, ever since last week's meeting, to find just where I could apply any one thing that I had learned in psychology, either for myself or my

school; and I have to confess that it was a dismal failure," said Miss Palmer, one of our older teachers.

"My case, to a T," said Mr. Lowell, "except that I gave up on the third round, and was not disposed to try another. I'd rather play baseball, although I've no special affinity for that, either!"

"If your psychology had taught you how to train your will, perhaps you would not have allowed yourself to be defeated by one failure, nor a dozen," responded Miss Preston, with one of her rare smiles. "Now, the very first thing that I learned, which was really an application of what I knew, was in regard to persistence, and especially in reference to an object to be gained. In my case it was a question of sleep. I was born nervous, acquired nervousness as I went along for twenty-five years, and had it thrust upon me by my work, my want of self-control, and the habit of sleeplessness to which it had lead. When I awoke to this fact, I was already a chloral victim, to the extent that I slept only under its influence, and but little even so. It had been prescribed by our family physician, and my psychology had not taught me to question anything that came with fairly good authority, nor to sift things; so I swallowed the chloral, night after night, only to find myself less and less inclined to sleep as I ought, until, as I say, I was awakened to the situation."

Such intense interest as was generated by this simple recital, even I was not prepared for! How the questions did rain in on the speaker! Parliamentary usage was not called for nor even thought of; but "Do tell us about it!" "How did you work out the problem?" "Where did you begin?" "Just what did you do first, and how?"

Finally, Mr. Wheeler (he was in the chair that day), seeing the way that the tide was turning, and deciding to make the most of it, said: "Miss Preston, will you not come to the platform, where you will be more easily heard?"

With the little red spot flaming on each cheek, which always tells us that she is under the special excitement of enthusiasm, Miss Preston went slowly up the aisle and steps, and with a slight nod spoke, as easily as if to her own class:

"I had an idea, of course, that the habits of years could not be overcome in a few hours, days, or months; and that it meant a fight to the finish. Still, I had a moderately well-developed will, and it was more a question of how to use that, than anything else. Reasoning out the thing, I saw that it meant for me to so control my thought, my body, and my entire being, that all would tend to woo the dreamy goddess who had been worked, worried and otherwise driven from my pillow. So I began the discipline of all, forbidding even the entrance of thought, when I was ready to sleep, and by simple arrangements to prepare my pillow for the reign of Lady Sleep. I knew that it would take time, it might be a long time; but I determined to bring my will power to the test, and succeeded, not fully at first, but so effectively that now I can sleep anywhere, in a street car, stage coach, or in a chair, at almost any time, and under very trying circumstances."

"But just how did you control thought?" asked Mr. Whipple. "Now I can control some things, motion, direction, action; but thought? That is too mystical for me!"

"And for me!" "Me too!" was heard here and there.

Taking the bull by the horns, Miss Preston said, laughingly:

"Why, you all control thought, more or less, all the time. It is only that you do it unconsciously and therefore imperfectly; but if you will determine to do it, and then set yourselves to its accomplishment, you will be surprised to see how very easy of attainment the thing is."

"Would you mind proving that, Miss Preston?" asked Mr. Johnson.

"Not in the least," was the earnest reply. "I think that we are all possessed of unconscious powers, and that it is only when we use these and live up to our best, that we make the most of life and of its opportunities for good, to ourselves and others. But, to illustrate: As I don't wish to direct your thought at present, I will show you something, without naming it. As soon as you find yourselves thinking of it, will you not kindly indicate it by uplifted hands, that I may know when all are thinking of that which I show?"

Then she held up her watch, and the hands began to go up, as one and another thought of the tiny object.

"That is very well," was the pleased comment. "Make a note of the fact that *you can think of a visible thing, at will.* Now see if *you can transfer thought, from one visible thing to another*, and think of the next thing that I hold up," raising a book that lay on the desk.

Again the hands came up, and as quickly, in response to the summons. "And now let us go a step farther and *transfer the thought from the visible to the temporarily invisible.* See if you can think, at will, of someone con-

nected with the production of the book—the author, printer, proof reader, binder, publisher, or salesman."

And once more she was gratified at the show of hands. "Now take another step and *travel from one invisible thing to another invisible one.* Think of some other book, or a magazine, or paper."

And they did, with apparently equal ease. "And now for the hardest test, perhaps. *Carry your thought from the invisible, which is concrete, to the invisible, which is abstract,* and think of some quality of that book—as lively, pernicious, depressing, inspirational, etc."

This time the hands came up more slowly, but all showed finally. "Now," said she, "you have all been controlling thought, and doing it voluntarily, through will power. The question then becomes one of determination and of endurance. Make up your mind to hold your thoughts right down to whatever you have in hand, and, if you are in church, listen to the sermon that you go there to hear, rather than let your thoughts come and go on other things. If it is reading, or study, do the same. Know simply nothing but what is before you, even if you at first have to harness the thought engine with a drag chain. And if you want to sleep, why just clear out your thought house; and don't allow even one intruder to come in and dance a jig about your school, your salary, nor any trouble or pleasure, any duty or neglect; but give yourself up to the business of sleeping, and to sleeping thoroughly."

Oh, my! The buzz that followed! Of course, it was all plain now, and to even the dullest of us; but some wanted more light, especially about the physical preparations, and I must give you a synopsis of these:

Go to bed comfortably. If the feet are cold or wet, warm or dry them. If you are hungry, eat something, and let it be something warm, like a cup of hot broth, a cup of hot milk, or even a piece of hot toast. If you can't do better, heat a cup of water, and make some Scotch broth, of crackers (or dry bread) broken in a cup, seasoned with salt and butter, and turn the boiling water over all.

If specially nervous, take a short, but quick walk, in the open air. If you can't do that, take a hot bath, beginning with the water only warm, but adding more as it grows cool.

In any event, go to bed slowly and quietly. Make as few motions as possible, and as little effort as you may.

Darken the room, and be sure that it and the bedding are well ventilated.

Make a complete change of clothing, from that worn during the day.

Don't try any tricks of counting, thinking of a flock of sheep, nor of anything, but drop off quietly, and at once, into the land of dreams.

Really psychology has its good points, even for the commonest teacher of us all, if it will help us in the ills that reach us through such common things as loss of sleep, memory, etc., and will fortify us to meet and conquer fear, prejudice and other detrimental things.

We are all at it now, and all the time, as John Wesley said that his church people must be if they would accomplish something. More anon, from

Yours Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXXIV.

OPENING EXERCISES.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., April 2, 189–.

My Dear Mr. ——*:* — I know that you will think that we struck the keynote to lots of trouble, at our last meeting, when I tell you that we sounded the heights and depths of "Morning Exercises." But we had been in deep waters before, and so were not alarmed, even when some of us felt that we were nearing danger!

"I always dread the opening exercises, almost more than any other part of the day," began Miss Wells.

"Why?" asked Mr. Johnson.

"Oh, in the first place, I know that the children have no natural aptitude for the reading of psalms, nor for the moral talks which I think they need from time to time, and which are more conveniently put in then than later in the day. I am sure, too, that if I notice one half of the pranks that are being cut up under my very nose, as it were, I shall simply open the door to more mischief. And when the stragglers begin to come in, I am just enough upset to be almost cross, if not quite so."

"That's about my feeble condition, except that I haven't quite dared shut my eyes to the mischief as yet," said Mr. Wheeler. "At times it seems little short of sacrilege to ask or even to allow children to come in fresh from

play-ground frolic, or play-ground trouble, and sing hymns, recite Scripture verses, and so on; and I have very grave doubts about the everlasting good that is accomplished; while I am pretty certain that some of the evils that are engendered thereby are neither uncertain nor intangible."

"Can you name some of these evils?" asked Mr. Johnson.

"I should say, for one thing, that irreverence is fostered. I believe in the preparation of the heart as well as the mind and body. And I don't believe that this is cultivated by the rush from one thing to another. Even Moses had instruction to put off his shoes when he stood on holy ground. I am inclined, too, to think that it begets a habit of carelessness; and that the perfunctory performance of any duty makes that duty distasteful after a time."

"I agree with you there," said Miss Preston. "But why let the morning exercises degenerate into anything that *is* either sacrilegious or perfunctory?"

"Why, I don't well see how I can help it in this instance. I have not found the children any too keen for other things; and this is simply the 'last straw,' in their minds. I can manage so that they don't know the terrible monotony of most things in the world of study, but will confess that I am somewhat powerless when it comes to morning exercises."

"We have a season of quotations from favorite authors, and that helps us," said Miss Smith.

"So do we sometimes," said Miss Preston; "and at others we have familiar talks about anything of interest in the current events at home and abroad. Just now we are on the *qui vive* over the *Dreyfus case*, which has been

followed from first to last by the class in history, from which the interest spread to the others. Then, too, once in awhile I get some one to come in and talk to the school for five or ten minutes about whatever they are most interested in or familiar with. I have just had a very pleasant series of short talks from Miss Sherwood, on the castles of Europe, given for the benefit of the geography class primarily, but dripping through to the rest. Dr. Scofield has given more than one scientific talk, which he has been glad to illustrate with his microscope. He has a fine lot of mounted specimens; and when my advanced class in physiology came to study the circulation of the blood, I had only to ask him to give us a talk, when he responded, and since then has several times offered his services. I have sometimes, too, found it profitable to get some one who could give personal experiences of travel, or recollections of progress in science, living, or the Civil War. I sometimes get a really fine reader, or speaker, to come in and give us something that will wake up the reading classes as to their own possibilities; for I want each one to believe the very best of himself, and to know that no matter how distinguished anyone becomes in after life, the key to all printed knowledge is in the learning to read, and that that takes hard work, drudgery even. If they can sometimes see and hear what can be done with the human voice, or with anything, and learn that it is drudgery rather than genius that will accomplish the same thing for them, it will be an incentive to study. I believe that the morning hour carries great possibilities in this way, more, perhaps, than any other part of the day; and so I try to make the opening exercises as attractive as I can."

"I should think that you would hardly need to offer premiums on prompt and regular attendance, then!" said Mr. Macomber, with a touch of sarcasm.

"If I believed in the premium system at all, I might be obliged to," replied Miss Preston, ignoring the quality of his remark. "But with this feature made prominent, I have but little need even to accentuate the necessities for punctuality. I aim to get prompt and regular attendance for the child's own sake; but I am not sure that he will always be prompt and regular, unless there is an incentive behind the ethics, through his early years. Then, too, I believe that we ought to start the day happily; so that, no matter what comes up afterwards of an unpleasant nature, and no matter what the child has had to endure before starting for school, his memory of the morning hour will be always a pleasure, and the lessons learned and the inspiration gained will go with him through life."

"You are right, Miss Preston, and perhaps we have none of us realized just how much power we carry right here," said Mr. Johnson. "If we can so plan the opening exercises that they will hurt no one's conscience, and not reach the dead level of monotony (He is taking on Miss Preston's language as well as thought!) so that they will be looked forward to by all with pleasant anticipation, and back with fond memories, we have found the key to success in this part of the work. Do you add music?"

"Yes, but not too classical, and not too much of it, nor of too serious a nature. We organized a school choir, of some of the timid ones, to develop their talent, and a school orchestra, having a drum, mouth organ, triangle, concertina and a mandolin. We are doing very well, and are planning

to have a piano soon, which, with the wheezy organ that is already ours, will give us plenty of music for any and all occasions."

"Do you read the Bible at your morning service?" asked Mr. Wheeler.

"Yes, but sparingly, and with all the discretion that I can command. I am pretty sure to leave out the pictures of torment, and touch heavily upon those that engender hope, courage, and promise, coupled with the lines of duty. Sometimes I paraphrase a Bible story, and tell it without all the details, if I find that something has come up which will make Scriptural illustration of special merit. But I think the proper selection of Scripture, the prayer to be offered, and the music for the morning exercises, all require a great deal of discriminating thought. Reverence can be taught even more by implication and example than by words; and the whole benefit of the morning exercises will be greatly intensified if carried out in the right spirit."

Discussion of these and other points used up the hour, and it was with a feeling that we had all gained something that we separated. I know one thing: That with a class of eighty-one in my room, I have had more than a week go by recently without a single case of absence or tardiness, and more than two months without any tardy ones. I believe that my record is not far different from the rest of our school; and yet the subject is rarely mentioned in "chapel," as we call our morning gatherings. They are among the sweetest meetings that we have, as a school; but there is no pressure brought to bear on anyone, to secure attendance; and it is no unusual thing to find several of the

parents in at our opening exercises. They are sure to hear something useful, beautiful, and pleasant; and they show their good will by not waiting for a special invitation.

Miss Preston keeps a box labeled "Suggestions for Opening"; and when any of us, teacher or pupil, find a pretty poem, a bit of interesting news, a choice piece of music, an anecdote, or anything that will "piece out" for an emergency, when other material is short, the box always responds to the demand.

Hoping that this will help some one else, who has found the problem a deep one, I am

Very Truly,

MISS PRESTON'S ASSISTANT.

No. XXXV.

REVIEWS.

OLDTOWN, N. Y., April 20, 189–.

My Dear Superintendent: — The subject of "Reviews" came up last week, and so much valuable thought was brought to light that I believe it had better go where it will be sure to help some one else, as I am confident that it will in your hands.

Mr. Macomber said something to Miss Preston which started the discussion, and the rest of us lent a hand, or a pair of them! Said he: "Miss Preston, I am inclined to disagree with you as to the value of reviews, referred to by you in your talk on history the other day."

"Do you? On what grounds, please?" with a most winning smile.

"Why, it does not seem to me really pedagogical to review. Once the lesson has been truly and thoroughly developed, it seems like a waste of raw material to go over and over it, again and again. I had as soon see a farmer trying to thresh old straw," a trifle pompously, and with supreme self-consciousness, for all eyes were turned upon him, and he felt that he had a prime advantage in the use of the word "pedagogical," as Miss Preston rarely uses so long or so scientific a term! If he had only known what most of us were thinking!

"I am sure that I at least do not mean to waste any of the child's time in doing either weak or unnecessary things," was the quiet reply. "And yet, I sometimes question if our work is not done too superficially, even when it has had the conceded advantage of drill and thoroughness, so far as we can command either. How many, do you think, of the little folks would remember that two and two is four, even after a 'thorough and true development' of the combination, if nothing ever brought it to their finite and juvenile minds again?"

"Yes, but that's just it!" he exclaimed, excitedly. "Things do bring the combination to their observation, and daily if not hourly. So that all the time that you have been giving to reviews might better have been given to something new, some other study."

"I'm not so sure. But conceding the truth of your observation, for sake of the argument: Then would you limit the force of your remark to such studies as those that do not have their fundamental truths brought home daily, if not hourly?"

Mr. Macomber began to squirm, as the logic drove him into constantly narrowing quarters, but he still wriggled!

"Why, I think that the rule is about equally good everywhere," he almost gasped, as he floundered.

"Then, in just what way would you recommend me to so teach the location and climate of Japan, for instance, that it might be brought to the child's mind, daily or even hourly? And do the different points in physiology, history, etc., come to the child in that way, without the discipline of drill?"

The battle was on, and in earnest. None of us were

especially sorry for the presumptuous young pedagogue, even in his embarrassment; for he had been itching for just this, ever since he had attended our first meeting, and had then thrown down the gauntlet, which Miss Preston had, in mercy, refused to pick up. Fortunately, Mr. Johnson came to the rescue, with a magnanimity which is not usual with us "women-folks" and which did not seem to crop out with surprising abundance among the men of our force. To tell the truth, I think that all hoped that the time had come when the new man could be taught that even first-class pedagogy may become offensively intrusive, in the hands of an upstart!

"Miss Preston, will you be kind enough to give us some of your best points in the matter of reviews? I have happened in two or three times when you have had something of the sort on the carpet, and I have always been more than surprised and pleased at the revelation of your very thorough methods," said Mr. Johnson, warmly. "The truth is that while development lessons are all right, I am beginning to think that the old-fashioned drill, to follow the development, gives a better result than either could accomplish alone."

"I agree with you, and heartily," responded Miss Preston. "The combination of development and drill is best. If we only wouldn't run after new fancies to the exclusion of the old, but would sort out the best of each, it would improve the stock, all around! We are prone to either discard the one, in toto, and cling only to the other, or we snatch at anything that offers change, while perhaps the change is not in the least beneficial. In our school, our reviews have been merely complete recitations, with a

few novel features put in, to add pleasure to profit. I generally call for volunteer service in this, as in some other things, at first. I get all that I can by having each pupil give one fact, no one to repeat what some one else has said, and all to be on the watch to see that nothing is given erroneously. Any who let an error slip by without comment, are considered as accessories, and so lose credit or standing. A mis-statement rarely goes around the entire class; but if it does, it serves to keep them wider awake for the next bout."

"What follows the volunteer work?" asked Professor Lowell, with note-book in hand. He picks up a lot of information at these meetings, and never seems the least bit disturbed to be caught in the very act of transcribing. Some men would find it embarrassing to be seen doing anything that so nearly looks like study; and even some of our women teachers hate to have it thought that the zero of their educational thermometer ever shows up... or down!

"Why, then we are likely to have a few minutes of reciting by turn, or by topic, by name, or by seat, one half against the other, or in some of the various ways that we use for other recitations. We get in some fun, if it is possible; and yet we do not let even that run riot. I try to keep the main idea uppermost, even when 'correlating'; for I have found that most people, and especially children, find it difficult to hold the attention to any one thing long enough to get all the good that there is in it, even when side issues are not so much as introduced. We have too much skimming, as a rule, in our teaching; and we do not suck our educational oranges quite dry enough before leaving them as a habit."

"Will you tell me just how you manage to get any fun out of anything so forlorn as a review lesson?" asked Miss Smith.

"Oh, my! The average boy, or girl, for that matter, sees fun and humor everywhere; but if not, I try to open the perspective. My part of the play is to control the fun and cultivate the humor, but not to suppress either. I remember several years ago of assigning a review in history that had (in the text-book recitation) so much about Indians, their assaults on the white people, at the time of the settlement of the early states, that even as I gave the lesson, I thought: 'Here is certainly one thing that has no chance for any bubbling humor.' But when it came time for the written review papers, one of the quietest boys of the class had written: 'The Indian had one habit that some men have copied ever since: He always let his wife, or squaw, do the work, while he did the fighting.' That brought out actual fun, and earnest discussion, as well. But it is true, in other things besides reviews, that the natural bent to fun will easily come to the surface if it is not constantly suppressed; and it ought not to be."

"I quite agree with you now, Miss Preston, although I should not, perhaps, once," said Mr. Johnson. "The child who is happiest is going to do more and better work, and get more good from it, than he who goes about it only because he must. But tell us more about the reviews."

"Sometimes we conduct the review as we would an old-fashioned spelling school, arraying one side against another, and having the subject announced for some days ahead of

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time, that each side may prepare for the contest. At other times, I write out leading topics, or head lines, on the blackboard, and see who can do the best filling in, impromptu. Once in a while I get the class to look out for its own weak spots, and help each one 'shore up' where he is in a tottling condition. The main thing is to keep the interest at high water mark, so that in being thorough a sense of exhaustion will not follow. Another, but rather more risky, way is to let the class talk to an audience, real or imaginary, that has no knowledge of the lesson in question, and starting from the beginning, let each one lay a brick in the fabric, 'turn about,' each one putting his share not only in place, but at the right time; so that when complete, the story, or lesson, shall be not only entire but symmetrical. In this way, not only the matter must be well in hand, but the manner also, so that there will be no stumbling over form."

"Dear me!" said Miss White. "There's a whole lot of possibilities done up in a review; and I have always thought that it only meant to say 'Begin at page 16, and review the lessons to 38.' How it does take experience to know just how to teach!"

"Yes, or to do almost anything. But that is one trouble with the newly-graduated. As a rule, it is the fledgling that has the most assurance, here as elsewhere," observed Mr. Johnson, totally oblivious that he was stepping on anybody's toes, and I secretly wished that they were mine — for I would willingly take the criticisms for sake of the years that it would give me, backward, to be a fledgling again; and I could do so much better work, now, if I were in the younger class! But one thing is certain, I'm not too

old to profit by what I hear and read. So there's still a bright side, even for

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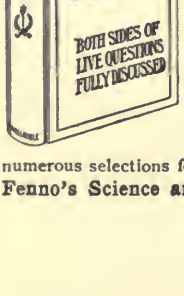

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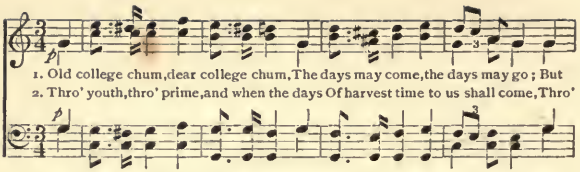
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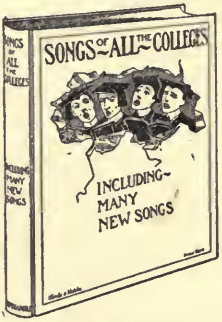
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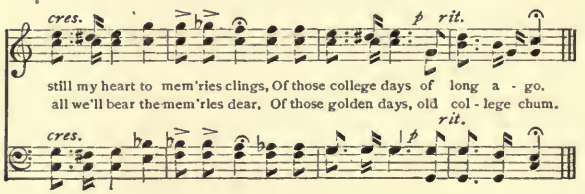
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